

DRAGONLANCE

# THE TOBRIL

Issue 6 — November 2003



# The Tobril

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# Editorial

## The Horror, The Horror

—Written by Luis Fernando De Pippo



**Dragonlance is not a setting that lends itself well to run a horror game, especially gothic horror adventures. Unlike other**

**settings, undead or demonic influences are not as prevalent, and in some cases not as wicked, as those found in other settings such as the Forgotten Realms or Greyhawk (of course let's not get started on Ravenloft, the premier gothic setting).**

Add to this the fact that Krynn's peculiar cosmology prevents much planar travel or extra-planar invasions and you get a setting much more focused on heroic fantasy. In fact, Chaos and his minions formed the most significant extra-planar invasion during the aptly named Summer of Chaos, which provided us with Daemon Warriors and plenty of demonic monsters and humanoids, and the invasion of the Dragon Overlords during the early Fifth Age could at a stretch be called extra-planar... but then again they are not exactly gothic horror monsters.

Returning to gothic horror, most of its elements are either absent, unusable or unavailable on Krynn. You can find plenty of abandoned castles in Solamnia, Ergoth and other locations belonging to the former Istarian empire, but they are not usually haunted in the classic sense, and do not lend themselves well to the tragic story of slaughtered families or dynastic curses. The old, crumbling manor, another staple of the genre, is also mostly absent and there are few places where it could be found and used with any degree of success.

That said Dragonlance boasts one of the most famous, if

not the most infamous of all undead from the old TSR campaign settings: Lord Soth. The death knight has such a compelling background and personality that he is known far and wide, even in other worlds. During the TSR years he was even moved to Ravenloft and gained quite a few fans there, but most Dragonlance fans ignore this period focusing only on his career on Krynn. Even if you truly hate Ravenloft you should pick up the two novels of that setting that feature Soth: *Knight of the Black Rose* and *Specter of the Black Rose*. *Knight of the Black Rose* is worthwhile to Dragonlance fans due to the fact that the first quarter of the book retells the battle of Palanthas first told in *Test of the Twins*, but this time from Soth's perspective and in first person. There is less material for the Dragonlance fan in *Specter* but a lot of Soth's past is fleshed out and some interesting characters are introduced as well as an explanation of some of Soth's character. The only problem is that the explanation of why Soth was let go from Ravenloft clashes with what he later does in *Dragons of a Vanished Moon*...

If you are a gamer the Ravenloft module *When Black Roses Bloom* should categorically be in your collection. Not only is it a great adventure, it can, with certain modifications, be run in your regular Dragonlance campaign, providing a lot of interesting background for our favorite death knight, and can also be used as a basis for a time travelling campaign.

All of which brings us to the Horror issue of *the Tobril*. Inside you will find lots of undead goodies for your game, including a detailed study of the *Ancient Dead of Krynn* by *Tobril* regular John Grubber, and not to mention an horrifying encounter with (shudder) kender undead provided by Sean MacDonald.

So sit back, and I hope you enjoy the issue!

Luis Fernando De Pippo  
Editor of *the Tobril*

### Submitting your articles:

If you've written a piece of fiction, reference, gaming or have some other Dragonlance-related article to show the community and would like to see it in a future issue of *the Tobril* just send your proposals to [tobril@dragonlance.com](mailto:tobril@dragonlance.com). We're also very interested in hearing your thoughts on the magazine so sharpen those quills and bring out the ink. "By the fans, for the fans."

### Do you want to help?

If you like to draw Dragonlance characters or help proofread the magazine, email us. We're looking for a few good fans.





# Kender Corner

## A Visit to Kendermore

—Written by Sean Macdonald; illustrated by Sergio Rodriguez



*s I looked down upon the ruins  
my heart broke. I had always  
heard how terrible it was but  
until I laid my eyes on it I*

*could never have realized just how awful. It  
had been nearly forty years since its  
destruction. The city that was once full of  
energy and joy now lay still and silent like  
a corpse. Its life was stolen from it by the  
red marauder, Malystrixx, and her ogre  
armies.*

I had lived here for a while when I was a young kender and I visited once when the city was full of carefree energetic kender bustling from one building to another. All around it were the rich green trees and sounds of music and merrymaking. Eventually my wandering led me far from Kendermore and even after its destruction it was not until I was given a mission by Belladonna herself that I decided to make the journey. The “other” kender in Hylo, the “afflicted” kender that we “true” kender could just never understand, began to make a little more sense to me.

I looked around at my companion. Blight Thistleknot was an afflicted kender. I could tell, by the way he always questioned me on my motives and kept alert at all times, scanning the sky and the environment around him. There was no child-like wonder in that gaze; there was no appreciation of the blue of the sky or the sound of the wind as it rounded a jagged outcropping of rock. There was only a paranoia of unseen dangers. Not that I blame him much. The journey to reach Kendermore has had some fascinating, if not dangerous encounters along the way. Giant black boars, great fields of dog-sized trapdoor spiders, humungous ill tempered ogres and bears as big as a house are only a few of the dangers we had already encountered. I looked forward to more, but I could tell Blight would not be as excited by the prospect.

Blight was the only kender who had been willing to go this far. The other kender, who called themselves Desolation Trackers, had remained behind, beyond the view of the city. Evidently the afflicted kender of the Desolation consider Kendermore bad luck, a concept that is as foreign to any true kender as laziness is to a dwarf. Blight however was different. He did not like being here, but had decided to help me for his own reasons.

We approached the ruins from the foothills along the east where most of the destruction had occurred. When I asked Blight why we could not simply enter from the north gate which we happened to be facing he told me it might be watched, but he wouldn't tell me by whom. He made it very clear that under no circumstances were we to remain in Kendermore after dark. This left me precious little time to search for what I was after.

As we made our way through the rubble of the walls and buildings in the east, a preternatural chill came over me. I shivered and assumed it was because the Peak of Malys had cast a shadow over the entire city in the early morning. Everything was covered in a thick layer of ash and it quickly attached itself to our clothing as we journeyed further into the city.

### THE CITY

Easily the most recognizable structure in Kendermore is the Great Library. Designed to look like the dwarven fortress Pax Tharkas the building was created with huge slabs of granite and marble. The weight of the structure was so great that shortly after its completion the building began to sink into the ground. The ever-optimistic kender decided that one day it may make a great underground library and drew up plans for a new construction to be placed on top of it. But to their dismay, after the first foot it sank only a few inches every year. Visitors to Kendermore have often wondered to what use the kender put such a structure, for book reading does not seem to be high on their list of priorities. Truly, it may not... but collecting is. The library once held thousands of books borrowed from all over the continent. Plus the library was also a major hub of trade in the city. With the final attack on the city the hulking building survived, but the insides were put to the torch by the invaders.



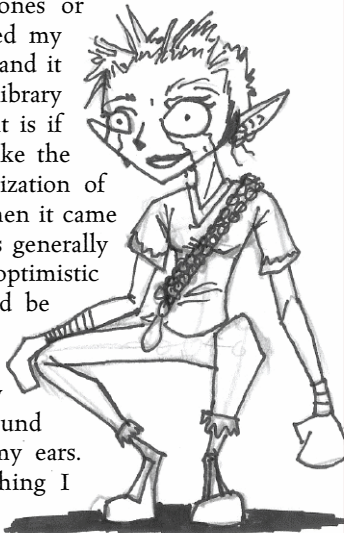
The library was our first destination in the city. In the gloom of the mountain's shadow we slunk around the decimated structures and made our way to it. Why were we slinking? I don't really know. It just felt right at the time. As we approached the entrance to the library Blight stopped me and put an ash covered finger to his lips. Then he pointed to the doors of the building. Sitting on the steps of the building was an old kender, crying. My first reaction was to immediately head over to the pour soul and see what I could do to cheer him up. Blight grabbed me by the shirt and dragged me back down.

He explained to me that I should never approach any other kender while in Kendermore. There were too many of them that refused to believe they were actually dead. I was stunned by this revelation. Undead kender? I couldn't believe it. Blight took a longer look at the figure on the stairs and said that the kender was a Feyrl. The Feyrl is an odd sort of undead that appears to be a living being. It even continues to grow older and cannot be detected as undead. Most Feyrl are found wandering the Desolation in a state of madness. They are lost in fits of insane hallucinations and are easily enraged. Blight warned me that the kender would first seek to gain our sympathy before it attacked us in a wild rage and moved on to its next victim. A few moments later the sobbing undead kender walked down from the steps and into the maze of surrounding jagged broken walls.

Silently we crept into the library, slipping beneath the thick oak doors that hung precariously over the entrance. The inside of the library was dark and it took a few minutes for my eyes to adjust. A feeble light from a number of broken windows seeped into the room. Looking around the inside of the building I noticed it was just as dirty as the rest of the city. It was also covered in a fine black ash, and piles of broken furniture and cinders lay in the corners. Many of the bookshelves had been designed with the same stone used to construct the building and they lay haphazardly on top of one another. Blight waited by the door and I proceeded down one of the crooked aisles of broken stone.

I didn't think the artifact I was seeking was in the library, but Belladonna had insisted I find anything of value on my trip here. Being an older kender I understood that she was not referring to the toys, stones or shiny trinket that usually filled my pouches. She was after magic and it was well known that the library contained magical scrolls—that is if they could be found. Much like the city there was no true organization of items within the library, so when it came to finding a certain text it was generally hunt, peck, and hope. I was optimistic that any magical scrolls would be resistant to the fire and thus have survived the burning.

As I continued picking my way through the debris the sound of crumbled paper came to my ears. Thinking I had found something I continued to shuffle my feet in the ash looking for any



## FEYRL:

### Small Undead

**Hit Dice:** 3d12+3 (22 hp)

**Initiative:** +1 (+1 Dex)

**Speed:** 20 ft. (4 squares)

**Armor Class:** 12 (+1 size, +1 Dex), touch 12, flat-footed 11

**Base Attack/Grapple:** +1/–3

**Attack:** Slam +2 melee (1d3 +0)

**Full Attack:** 2 Slam +0 melee (1d3 +0) and bite –5 melee (1d2 +0)

**Space/Reach:** 5 ft./5 ft.

**Special Qualities:** Broken mind, darkvision 60ft., rage, undead traits

**Saves:** Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +2

**Abilities:** Str 11, Dex 13, Con —, Int 11, Wis 9, Cha 11

**Skills:** Balance +3, Climb +2, Hide +7, Intimidate +2, Jump +4, Listen +3, Move Silently +5, Spot +3

**Feats:** Great Fortitude, Improved Natural Attack (b), Toughness

**Environment:** Any land

**Organization:** Solitary

**Challenge Rating:** 3

**Treasure:** None

**Alignment:** Always neutral evil

**Advancement:** 4-6 HD (Small); 7-9 HD (Medium)

**Level Adjustment:** —

*A very confused kender wanders around babbling and laughing. Her skin is covered in sores and patches of hair have fallen or been pulled out and she is wearing tattered clothing.*

Feyrls are undead kender that have suffered and died in an event of a catastrophic nature so terrible it damaged their mind and their body. For all intensive purposes feyrl appear to be living kender. They do not appear dead, they eat breathe and sleep and do not feel cold to the touch. Their body continues to age, although at a somewhat slower rate than before.

Most feyrl died of shock or fright or inconspicuous wounds, such as hidden sword strikes or stones to the head. These wounds are often hard to detect among the other festering sores and sun damage from wandering without protection in the Desolation.

Most individuals that encounter a feyrl assume they are kender that have been lost in the Desolation. They are totally unaware that the kender is an undead creature. A feyrl's broken mind causes it to babble incoherently and rarely give a straight answer to anything. Healing spells performed on a feyrl scare and enrage it.

## COMBAT

Feyrl are extremely confused creatures. They are often unaware of their own actions, much less able to control them. They will usually appear to be friendly—only to turn on an individual at a moments notice.

**Broken Mind (Ex):** Because of the shattered mind of the feyrl there is a 20% chance every 5 rounds that they will become confused and fall under the effects of a *random action* spell for 1 round. Additionally anyone that targets a feyrl with a thought detection, mind control, or telepathic ability/spell takes 1d4 points of temporary Wisdom damage.

**Rage (Ex):** If a feyrl takes damage it flies into a wild rage attacking anything near it until, it is dead or its opponents are dead, or it succumbs to the effects of its Broken Mind and is forced to change its actions. The feyrl gains a temporary +4 to Strength, +4 to Constitution and –2 to AC.



**Detection Immunity (Su):** A feryl is immune to the effects of a *detect undead* spell and appears to be a normal, if confused, living creature.

## BURNED ONE

**Small Undead (Fire)**

**Hit Dice:** 4d12 (26 hp)

**Initiative:** +7 (+3 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)

**Speed:** 20 ft. (4 squares)

**Armor Class:** 15 (+1 size, +3 Dex, +1 natural), touch 14, flat-footed 12

**Base Attack/Grapple:** +2/-3

**Attack:** Claw +2 melee (1d3 -1 plus combustion)

**Full Attack:** 2 Claw +2 melee (1d3 -1 plus combustion)

**Space/Reach:** 5 ft./5 ft.

**Special Attacks:** Combustion, improved grab

**Special Qualities:** Darkvision 60ft., death throes, undead traits

**Saves:** Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +4

**Abilities:** Str 9, Dex 17, Con —, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 14

**Skills:** Balance +5, Hide +18, Jump +3, Listen +7, Move Silently +1\*, Spot +7

**Feats:** Alertness, Improved Initiative

**Environment:** Any land

**Organization:** Solitary, or Pair

**Challenge Rating:** 4

**Treasure:** None

**Alignment:** Always neutral evil

**Advancement:** 5-8 HD (Small); 9-12 HD (Medium)

**Level Adjustment:** —

*Springing from the shadows you see a horrific sight of a small horribly burned figure. Its skin is blackened, flaking and cracked and it makes a sound of crumpled paper as it moves. Just as it exits the darkness its head and hands burst into flames and it lets out a chilling shriek of pain.*

Burned ones are kender that met their demise while being burned alive. They roam the area surrounding the region of their death looking to give payback to the living for the suffering they have endured. They dwell in the shadows of nearby ruins or caverns for days or months at a time writhing in agony as they relive the tortuous nature of their death. The sounds of their leathery crackling skin can usually be heard long before they can be seen. When aggravated or excited the burned one will explode into fire. Its head and hands will become enveloped in flame and any combustible material it touches catches on fire. When it dies the burned one explodes in a blast of hot ash and flame.

## COMBAT

Despite being unable to control the fire that eternally consumes them burned ones are attracted to open flame. When in battle a burned one will usually unintentionally set a persons clothing on fire. If this happens the burned one will attempt to grapple the victim and immerse themselves in the flames, thereby causing additional fire damage to the victim each round. When a living creature passes near a burned one it will first attempt to hide itself before it attacks in a crazed frenzy.

**Combustion (Ex):** Any opponent struck by a burned ones claws must make a Reflex save (DC 14) or take an additional 1d8 points of fire damage as clothing ignites and armor burns white hot. The damage continues for 1d4+2 rounds after the burned one's last successful attack or until put out.

sign of parchment. The sound became louder and I noticed it was not caused by my own movements. I froze like a rabbit and the sound continued. I was not alone. My eyes darted left and right looking from one shadow to another. I couldn't see a thing but I could definitely hear something moving. My curiosity peaked, and with my nerves slightly on edge, I jumped reflexively when a creature burst forth from the shadows.



It was a kender, or used to be. Its body was horribly charred and I realized it was its own flaky skin that cracked when it moved. Its eyes were pinpricks of light and as it lunged at me, the creature's head and hands burst into flame. The heat of the fires forced me back and I raised my hoopak defensively in front of me. In a split second Blight was there attacking the creature, his sword flashing in the light of the creature's flames. It scored a hit on Blight and the afflicted kender's shirt caught on fire. Coming out of my trance I jumped into the fray swinging my hoopak. I may be old, but years of practice with my favored weapon have made me a formidable warrior. We fought the creature back but not without any damage to ourselves. Blight had some pretty nasty burns and my trusted hoopak had been singed by the flames.

After the fight the sound of more crackling paper urged us to leave the library and find a safe place to rest. Blight told me he was afraid that we might encounter another burned one, as he called them, but he thought that most of them had been destroyed. Perhaps the twisted magic of the Desolation has a way of restoring or creating new undead, I wondered aloud. Blight was not amused by the idea.

## DEEPER INTO THE MAZE

Knowing that Belladonna would not be happy that I was unsuccessful in finding any scrolls, but not seeing much of a choice, we decided to move east into the city. Knowing a bit about kender architecture it was difficult to tell if the buildings we were currently skulking through were ruined or not. It was easy enough to tell that they were in bad shape, with much of the wood rotted away and everything covered in that black ash, but some of the missing walls and doors



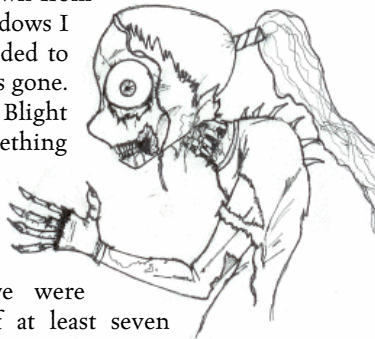
did not seem destroyed so much as missing by design. As we wandered along I indicated to my companion that the item I was looking for was located somewhere to the south of the city.

Here and there I could see signs of the fighting from nearly forty years ago. Great rings of blackened buildings stood with piles of ogre bones at their center, where the kender taunted and led the ogres into ambushes, burning them alive. In other places we discovered great pits with ogre bones where the kender had led their invaders on wild goose chases through the town toward additional pits and traps. In one place Blight stopped me from almost carelessly triggering a taunt twine with my upraised hoopak that would have resulted in a wall of stones toppling upon me. He said we had to be on the lookout for active traps from ages ago and even new ones. I asked who would be setting up new traps, but again he pointedly ignored me.

As we continued south I was surprised to see the south water tower still standing; well, most of it at any rate. The metal structure was half rusted and the upper casing of the water well had obvious holes in it. Inspecting the tower I noticed a figure looking down from above. Slipping into the shadows I caught Blights eye and nodded to the tower, but the figure was gone. Conversing in low whispers Blight cursed and muttered something about "creeps". He indicated we should change direction, but it was too late.

Before we knew it we were surrounded by a group of at least seven kender. Actually, undead kender may be a more appropriate term. They were obviously dead. Their skin was stretched taut over their skeletal forms and patches of skin and hair were missing. I remember wondering how I might look if I had grey skin and wondered if it would clash with my colorful clothing, before one of them spoke. In a raspy voice that sounded like it was forcing wind through old unused pipes the undead kender warned us that the kender of Kendermore could not abide the invasion of Malystrix into their home and were prepared to defend it against her minions. At first I was greatly relieved to hear this and was about to introduce myself to one of them when I was pelted by a stone from one of the creatures. It was then I realized that they believed that Blight and I were the minions!

The next thing I know, Blight screams "Run!" and I take off like an old jack rabbit. We lose sight of each other as we thread our way through a labyrinth of broken walls and rotting wood. As I looked back I could see that the creeps, as Blight had called them, were right on my tail. They apparently had traveled this way before and had no trouble deftly jumping from one stable block to another. For undead, I thought, those kender sure can move. I, on the other hand, was scrambling across blocks and ducking beneath beams. I knew they would catch me in a matter of minutes and I found a spot where I could put my back against a wall and prepared to defend myself.



**Death Throes (Ex):** When a burned one dies its body explodes in a blast of fire and scalding ash dealing 2d6 points of damage to anyone within a 10-foot radius. Affected creatures can make a Reflex save DC 14 for half damage.

**Improved Grab (Ex):** If a burned one hits a medium-sized or small creature with a claw attack it may attempt to grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it latches on to the creature and deals an additional 1d8 points of fire damage every round until the grapple is broken.

**Skills:** A burned one has a -4 racial penalty on Move Silently from its crackling skin and a +8 on hide while in surroundings such as ruins or burned out buildings.

## CREEP

### Small Undead

**Hit Dice:** 5d12 (32 hp)

**Initiative:** +4 (+4 Dex)

**Speed:** 30 ft. (6 squares)

**Armor Class:** 17 (+1 size, +4 Dex, +2 leather armor), touch 15, flat-footed 13

**Base Attack/Grapple:** +2/-1

**Attack:** Sithak +4 melee (1d4 +1)

**Full Attack:** 2 Sithak +4/-1 melee (1d4 +1/1d4 +1) or bite +4 melee (1d4 +0) and 2 claws -1/-6 melee (1d3 +0)

**Space/Reach:** 5 ft./5 ft.

**Special Attacks:** Energy drain, fear aura

**Special Qualities:** Darkvision 60ft., fast healing 3, scent, sunlight vulnerability, undead traits

**Saves:** Fort +1, Ref +7, Will +5

**Abilities:** Str 12, Dex 19, Con —, Int 10, Wis 13, Cha 16

**Skills:** Balance +6, Climb +6, Escape Artist +4, Hide +13, Jump +8, Listen +5, Move Silently +7, Search +2, Sleight of Hand +4, Spot +5, Swim +1, Tumble +4

**Feats:** Dodge, Lightning Reflexes

**Environment:** Warm land, underground

**Organization:** Solitary, Pair, Gang (2-5), or Patrol (5-20)

**Challenge Rating:** 5

**Treasure:** None

**Alignment:** Always chaotic evil

**Advancement:** 6-10 HD (Small); 11-15 HD (Medium)

**Level Adjustment:** —

*The kender before you has a grey-green skin stretched tight across its bony frame. It has two red lights deep within its eye sockets and moves with an unnatural grace.*

Creeps are the undead defenders of Kendermore. In their living years the creeps were comprised of a number of kender fighters, rangers, handlers and kender knights that defended Kendermore against the intrusion of outside forces. They were among the last kender to remain in the city when Malystrix descended upon the city and killed thousands of them.

The magic of the Desolation has twisted these kender into cruel and sadistic creatures. They ruthlessly seek to exterminate any "living" trespassers into the Ruins. By day they hide out in underground caverns, or buildings and structures above ground, that can keep the sun off them.

Creeps are most often encountered in patrols of 4 to 10 kender. They each will carry a kender weapon of some kind. Most prefer a sithak for its cutting blades and ability to shoot arrows. They are extremely agile and can gain access to almost any location within the city looking for intruders to maim and kill.



## COMBAT

Creeps were experienced warriors before they died and attack opponents in an intelligent manner taking advantage of cover and flanking when appropriate. They have also been known to set traps and drive their opponents (or lead them) straight into them.

**Energy Drain (Su):** Living creatures hit by a creep's bite attack gain one negative level. The DC is 15 for the Fortitude save to remove the negative level. For each such negative level bestowed, the creep gains 5 temporary hit points.

**Fear Aura (Su):** Those creatures that come within 5 feet of a Creep must make a Will save DC 15 or become panicked for 1d4 rounds. Those opponents that make their save are shaken for 1d4 rounds.

**Fast Healing (Ex):** A creep gains lost hit points at a rate of 2 hit points per round until he is brought down to 0 or below hit points, at which point the creep becomes inanimate for 10 rounds. They may choose not to move once their hit points rise above 0. This ability does not function in direct sunlight. To permanently destroy a creep, he must be exposed to direct sunlight for a full around in this inanimate state.

**Scent (Ex):** Creeps can use a sense of smell to track living creatures.

**Sunlight Vulnerability (Ex):** In direct sunlight a creep takes 3 hit points of damage per round. They avoid direct sunlight at all costs.

## MOANER

**Small Undead (Incorporeal)**

**Hit Dice:** 4d12 (26 hp)

**Initiative:** +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)

**Speed:** fly 20 ft. (perfect)

**Armor Class:** 16 (+1 size, +1 Dex, +4 deflection), touch 12, flat-footed 15

**Base Attack/Grapple:** +2/-2

**Attack:** Incorporeal touch +3 melee (1d4 Intelligence drain)

**Full Attack:** Incorporeal touch +3 melee (1d4 Intelligence drain)

**Space/Reach:** 5 ft./5 ft.

**Special Attacks:** Despair, Intelligence drain

**Special Qualities:** Darkvision 60ft., incorporeal traits, +2 turn resistance, undead traits

**Saves:** Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +5

**Abilities:** Str —, Dex 12, Con —, Int 11, Wis 12, Cha 18

**Skills:** Hide +11, Listen +5, Move Silently +8, Search +5, Spot +7

**Feats:** Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes

**Environment:** Any land

**Organization:** Solitary

**Challenge Rating:** 3

**Treasure:** None

**Alignment:** Always neutral evil

**Advancement:** 5-8 HD (Small); 9-12 HD (Medium)

**Level Adjustment:** —

*Hovering before you is the transparent insubstantial figure of a kender. The edges of the creature are blurry, wispy and hard to distinguish. Yet the face of the kender is one of abject despair. Its dejected expression is one of complete hopelessness.*

Moaners are the poor lost souls of those kender killed unjustly. The Desolation has a way of trapping their souls and binding them to the prime material plain. They wander alone or in families, weeping and moaning in despair.

I was breathing heavily as the creeps surrounded me and I tried to reason with them. I tried to explain I was a kender. I brandished my hoopak before me and began to launch into one of my favorite kender tales as the first creep lunged at me and hit me with the long curved blade of his sithak. A searing pain sliced through my side as I defended against the rest of the attacks. I was pelted with two more stones from slings, and was deciding where to go from there when the sun crept over the edge of the debris and shone down upon the creeps. They screamed and fell back into the shadows. Taking my chance I turned and climbed the nearest pile of rubble away from them.

At the top of the pile I took a deep breath in the full sunlight and coughed as I took a lungful of black ash. Then, through watery eyes, I looked to the east. The creeps were still there, but they were slowly falling back as the sun continued to rise above the peak of Malys. All around the city the darkness was peeled back like the scab from a festering wound. I exhaled a sigh of relief and lay down on a slab of stone, catching my breath and listening for anything out of the ordinary. Thus, I was not surprised when Blight appeared a short time later. His usual stern composure was even more pronounced as he crested the hill, and he was limping. I could see that he had tied a strip of his shirt around what looked like a sword wound.

We spoke little. I could tell he fully blamed me for his situation and was only remaining because of some inner sense of duty or his refusal to abandon a fellow kender; either way I was in his debt. Gauging my distance from the water tower I started heading toward the east again and Blight followed, seeming a bit more relaxed in the sunlight. But even the warmth from that light quickly began to change into a scalding heat. The heat became so relentless that we found ourselves looking forward to the relief the shadows offered.

## SUCCESS

After nearly four hours of searching we finally found the location I had been sent to find. It looked much like the rest of Kendermore. It was a massive ring of black and ruined buildings where pitch had been piled onto roofs and ignited. The bleached bones of ogres and kender alike were jutting up through a field of ash. Here and there you could see that the region had been disturbed by someone or something as it passed through. I began my search on the outskirts of the rings and over the next hour methodically made my way around the outlying buildings. Blight sat within the shadows of the highest structure keep an eye out for anything that moved.

Hot and sweating from the sun and tired from the exertion of the day I was near giving up when Blight called to me that it was time to go. It was an hour until sunset and he wanted to be well away before the creeps and other terrible creatures had a chance to emerge from their hiding places. It was just then that I stumbled across what I was looking for. A skull was grinning at me from under a collapsed building and I decided to check it out ignoring the afflicted kender's calls. Chipping away at a dried out rotten wooden beam I uncovered the skeleton of a kender. My heart started to flutter as I noticed a scrap of purple cloth



under the body. The honored Purple Mayoral robes of Kendermore. Finally I had found her.

Paxina Thistleknot. So the stories were true. She had stayed until the very end and perished giving her life to save thousands of kender. She was also Blight's aunt. I thought of telling him, but decided against it at the time. I continued to search around her body until I found what I was looking for. There it was embedded in the soft ground, a hoopak carved from the branch of a Vallenwood with an elegant design of ivy and roses down the length of it. A gift from her father, the tip of the hoopak was capped in pure platinum and in delicate script carved along the handle was lovingly etched the inscription of her name.

Blight appeared grumbling behind me about "some fools errand" when he spotted me holding the kender weapon. He gazed at me in disbelief and gave me a look that I hadn't seen since I met him. The curiosity and wonder that he displayed gave me a measure of hope for all afflicted kender, but the moment was fleeting. His face quickly returned to its normally taciturn state, and he bade us go. I slipped Paxina's hoopak into a loop on my backpack and followed the desolation tracker.

We headed north as fast as we could across the crumbling broken landscape. The sun was falling alarmingly close to the western Goodlund Mountain range and with it the shadows began to deepen. It was then the ground gave way beneath us. It simply caved in around us as we made our way across what appeared to be a stable section of stone. We landed nearly thirty feet below the surface. Blight was knocked unconscious when a sliding slab of rock struck him in the head and I was left with a sprained ankle. After the fall I took a moment to gather senses and tried to wake Blight. He merely groaned.

As darkness descended around us I could hear a sound that made my middle begin to quiver. It started out softly but intensified with the encroaching darkness. It was a bevy of screams, cries and moans. Curious as to what was happening I began to climb up the side of the sinkhole. I used my hoopak to create a stable foothold in the sliding debris and worked my way to the top. The orange rays of the sun were disappearing behind the mountains and in the darkness I could make out faint outlines of movements here and there. I felt as if I was witnessing the death of Kendermore. I could see figures running through the streets. Blood curdling cries and heartbreaking sobbing was all around me and then as the last rays of the sun disappeared so did the horrendous sounds. I could still see figures milling about in the darkness and decided to see if I could get a better look. I glanced back at Blight and he seemed to be sleeping so I left him to rest.

I hobbled about twenty feet on my bad ankle to the closest figure, and peeked over the edge of a broken wall. There, I spied the sad sight of a young kender woman. Her hair was unkempt and scraggly and her clothing was torn and dirty. The really amazing thing about her was that she was transparent. In the dying light I could just make out shapes of the ruins beyond her. Saddened by the sight I carelessly slipped and caught her attention. She began to walk toward me with her arms outstretched and I fell on my bad ankle. I reached for my hoopak but realized I had left it behind in the pit. Scrambling backwards I remembered Paxina's

Their chilling sadness can usually be heard before they appear, sometimes drawing forth a would-be-hero into their waiting arms. They seem to approach living beings out of a need for warmth and comfort, not fully comprehending that they are harming that person with their touch.

## COMBAT

Moaners do not usually appear threatening; they merely seem to be seeking comfort from the living. They gravitate toward any living being to feel the warmth of their life force.

**Intelligence Damage (Su):** Any target that is touched by the moaner temporarily loses 1d4 points of Intelligence. Any creature that has their Intelligence reduced to 0 is helpless until they have their Intelligence returned to at least 1 point. On a successful attack a moaner gains 5 temporary hit points.

**Despair (Su):** Moaners can emit a wail every 1d4 rounds that brings about despair to all that hear it. Those individuals that hear the wail and fail a Will save (DC 18) receive a -2 morale penalty to saving throws, attack rolls, ability checks, skill checks and weapon damage rolls. This ability may be countered by bardic music or the spell *good hope*. This ability lasts for 2d4 rounds and the effects of additional bouts of despair stack.

## WRATHFUL TAUNTER

**Small Undead (Incorporeal, Extraplanar)**

**Hit Dice:** 4d12 (26 hp)

**Initiative:** +8 (+4 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)

**Speed:** fly 30 ft. (good)

**Armor Class:** 19 (+1 size, +4 Dex, +4 natural), touch 15, flat-footed 15

**Base Attack/Grapple:** +1/+1

**Attack:** Slam +6 melee (1d4 plus energy drain)

**Full Attack:** Slam +6 melee (1d4 plus energy drain)

**Space/Reach:** 5 ft./5 ft.

**Special Attacks:** Energy drain, vile taunt

**Special Qualities:** Animate dead, damage reduction 5/magic, darkvision 60ft., undead traits

**Saves:** Fort +1, Ref +5, Will +5

**Abilities:** Str —, Dex 19, Con —, Int 11, Wis 14, Cha 15

**Skills:** Bluff +12, Hide +8, Intimidate +12, Listen +6, Spot +6

**Feats:** Improved Initiative, Persuasive

**Environment:** Warm underground

**Organization:** Solitary

**Challenge Rating:** 5

**Treasure:** None

**Alignment:** Always neutral evil

**Advancement:** 4-6 HD (Small); 7-9 HD (Medium)

**Level Adjustment:** —

*An emaciated kender with rotting skin and patches of missing hair shambles towards you and in a clear, shrieking, piercing voice begins to call you the most horrible names and verbally assaults you with the most atrocious insults.*

The wrathful taunter is actually a creature of the abyss that was drawn to the tragic loss of life during the destruction of Kendermore. It is one of the more treacherous kender spirits one can encounter in the ruins of the kender city. These undead creatures use an ability they formerly had in life to enrage the living and cause them to lose their patience and sanity.

In its natural state the wrathful taunter is an incorporeal spirit like a ghost. It can be faintly seen as a demonic-looking kender, but it will habitually inhabit the body of a dead humanoid (usually a kender) and animate the body so it may taunt its opponents.



## COMBAT

A wrathful taunter will usually be encountered near other undead, particularly zombies. It finds their bodies most useful for animating and can inhabit the body of any zombie. Once it has taken possession of the body it will select an opponent and begin taunting them in a horrible screeching voice that grates on the nerves. It delivers a litany of foul insults and offensive ridicule. This magically-enhanced taunting can drive a victim insane with rage, making the target violent and confused.

**Energy Drain (Su):** Living creatures hit by a wrathful taunter's slam attack gain one negative level. The DC is 14 for the Fortitude save to remove a negative level. The save DC is Charisma-based. For each such negative level bestowed, the wrathful taunter gains 5 temporary hit points.

**Vile Taunt (Su):** Each round any opponent that can hear and understand the taunts of a wrathful taunter, whether it is directed to them or not, must make a Will save (DC 14) or fall under the influence of the vile taunt. The taunt has three stages. The first round after a failed save causes the victim's attitude to shift to Hostile toward the taunter causing him to immediately attack the taunter. The second round causes the victim to fall under the effects of a *confusion* spell cast as a 12th level wizard. The third round the victim falls into a *rage*, as per the spell. The effects of the vile taunt last for 1d4 rounds after the wrathful taunter has been eliminated.

**Animate Dead (Su):** A wrathful taunter may take possession of a dead creature causing it to become a zombie. It may also possess the body of any animated zombie within 30 feet. At the very least a wrathful taunter must have access to a body that is whole and has a working mouth that has the ability to speak if it wishes to use its Vile Taunt ability. To take possession of a body that is already animated requires a standard action. To animate a new body or re-animate a previously animated whole body takes a full round action. Animating a body or voluntarily leaving one provokes an attack of opportunity. If a possessed zombie is brought to 0 hit points, the wrathful taunter is forced from it. Damage caused to the animated body is not inflicted on the wrathful taunter. It can only be harmed when it has been driven from its animated body.

## DRECK

### Small Undead

**Hit Dice:** 3d12+3 (22 hp)

**Initiative:** -2 (-2 Dex)

**Speed:** 10 ft. (2 squares)

**Armor Class:** 9 (+1 size, -2 Dex), touch 9, flat-footed 9

**Base Attack/Grapple:** +1/-2

**Attack:** Slam +3 melee (1d3 +1)

**Full Attack:** 2 Slam +3 melee (1d3 +1)

**Space/Reach:** 5 ft./5 ft.

**Special Attacks:** Improved grab, engulf

**Special Qualities:** Amorphous, darkvision 60ft., undead traits

**Saves:** Fort +1, Ref -1, Will +2

**Abilities:** Str 12, Dex 7, Con —, Int 11, Wis 8, Cha 13

**Skills:** Hide +11, Listen +3, Move Silently +15\*, Spot +5

**Feats:** Stealthy, Toughness

**Environment:** Any land

**Organization:** Solitary

**Challenge Rating:** 3

**Treasure:** None

**Alignment:** Always neutral evil

**Advancement:** 4-6 HD (Small); 7-9 HD (Medium)

**Level Adjustment:** —

Hoopak and pulled it from behind me. As the wispy outline of the kender drew near I could see the hopelessness in her eyes. The mission was impossible. Kendermore was cursed and now so was I. I might as well just give up the hoopak and everything else.

Swinging the hoopak around in front of me I struck the apparition accidentally and the sense of hopelessness left me. I realized this sad creature was inflicting me with the same dread that haunted her. I sat up and swung the hoopak again and it let out a pitiful moan. The sense of hopelessness settled upon me again, but I managed to shrug it off. Brandishing the weapon I fought off the pathetic apparition as it faded away.

Unfortunately the commotion drew the attention of more undead. Kipper Snifferdoo, I thought to myself, how many times has your curiosity gotten you into trouble? From what I could tell the kender surrounding me were more undead creatures. But unlike the creeps that chased us earlier in the day these creatures moved with stiff motions and mumbled unintelligible groans as they headed straight for me. I was just deciding to retreat into the sink hole and see if I could revive Blight to escape when one of the rotting corpses began speaking in a high-pitched, screeching voice.

Now I have lived a long time, for a kender, and I have given and received a number of talented and inventive taunts over the years. This one undead kender unleashed a torrent of insults so vile and wicked that I found myself nearly rushing into the mass of undead without thought. If it had not been for my long time experience with kender insults I would have done just that. Gritting my teeth against the flurry of verbal abuse I limped back and slid down into the pit. I was just in time too. Something had a hold of my companion.

At first I thought it was merely dirt or mud as it was hard to see by the moonlight, but it moved over him. Blight was squirming and wrestling around. He was pulling at an oozing substance as it was attempting to slide into his mouth and cover his chest. I scrambled down and used the tip of the hoopak to stab at the monster and was disgusted to see an eyeball swim through the creature murky blubbery skin and focus on me. As half the creature wrestled with the afflicted kender, the other half slithered over and began to engage me, attempting to rise up and slam down on my head. I beat it back with the hoopak and gore splattered with every stroke. My arms began to tire and my ankle throbbed painfully, but after a lengthy battle the creature stopped moving and seemed to become nothing more than an inanimate puddle of sludge. The eye continued to stare at me so I kicked dirt over it to cover it up.

The zombie kender were nearly upon the pit now and the wrathful taunter among them continued to screech insults intended to drive us into an insane rage. Blight was unsteady, but able to move. We used the last reserves of our strength to climb out of the pit. We did not choose to stay and fight, but instead bull rushed our way past the undead creatures as they swiped at us. We fled into the night with the sounds of the undead howling all around us. I can't say that I have ever truly been scared, but that was an experience I do not want to have to relive again.



*An amorphous blob of ooze creeps toward you. Its outer skin is comprised of a nearly transparent layer and you can see soft internal organs swimming beneath the dirty surface. Two vague arm shapes raise from the blob, reaching toward you...*

Drecks are the undead remains of those poor kender that were buried alive and crushed beneath fallen homes and cave-ins. Their bodies were flattened beyond recognition. Tainted by the force of the Desolation, a strong desire to live has turned them into abominations. They eventually find a way out of their final resting place, but they are nothing more than a puddle of ooze.

These kender are drawn by the life force of living beings. They sit motionless in hiding until a living creature makes its presence known. Then they seek to quench that life much like theirs was extinguished, by engulfing a victim, crushing and suffocating them.

## COMBAT

These creatures wait in dark corners and deep puddles on the ground covered in mud and muck making it difficult to spot them. They can also be encountered residing within the corpse of a former victim. When a living creature wanders by it will attack with its slam attack and attempt to engulf a creature. Once it has grabbed a hold of a victim it attempts to slither up into the mouth of the creature, suffocating it.

**Amorphous (Ex):** A dreck has no discernable shape. It is not subject to critical hits and has no clear front or back making it immune to flanking.

**Improved Grab (Ex):** To use this ability, a dreck must hit with one slam attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can attempt to engulf on the next round. This ability can be used on opponents up to one size category larger than the dreck.

**Engulf (Ex):** As a standard action a dreck may attempt to slither up to a creature's head that it is currently grappling and has a hold of. The victim must make a Strength check DC 13 or begin suffocating. Any damage inflicted on the dreck transfers half to the grappled victim. Each successive round the DC of the strength check increases by one.

**Skills:** A dreck has a +8 racial bonus on Move Silently checks.

We finally made our way out the north gate with a trail of undead kender right behind us and we ran for what seemed like hours before the other desolation trackers appeared and assisted us in our plight.

Now, as I add this entry in my journal, I am resting beneath a sickly tree at the edge of the foothills north of Kendermore. The other kender are keeping watch as Blight and I recover from our wounds and the experience of our visit to the city. I have been discussing the matter of Paxina's Hoopak with Blight and he has insisted that I bring it to Paxina's brother Kronn Thistleknot in Port Balifor. Yet, Belladonna has told me to bring it straight back to her. At this point however I don't think I am in any position to be traveling the Desolation alone. The weeks I have spent here have already shown me that this is not a place a kender wants to wander unaccompanied. So I will be forced to travel with these kender until I can proceed safely on my own. Now if I could just get this nagging sensation out of my head that something is still wrong.

As I begin to drift off to sleep the sounds of a giggling kender child touch my ears and a whispered message tells me that everything will be fine... just fine...**T**

## GIGGLER

**Medium Undead (Incorporeal)**

**Hit Dice:** 2d12 (13 hp)

**Initiative:** +7 (+3 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)

**Speed:** fly 50 ft. (perfect)

**Armor Class:** 17 (+3 Dex, +4 natural), touch 13, flat-footed 14

**Base Attack/Grapple:** +1/+4

**Attack:** Slam +3 melee (1d4 +1)

**Full Attack:** Slam +2 melee (1d4 +1)

**Space/Reach:** 5 ft./5 ft.

**Special Attacks:** Telekinesis

**Special Qualities:** Darkvision 60 ft., natural invisibility, telepathy, undead traits

**Saves:** Fort +0, Ref +3, Will +2

**Abilities:** Str —, Dex 17, Con —, Int 11, Wis 8, Cha 13

**Skills:** Hide +5, Listen +5, Sleight of Hand +9, Spot +5

**Feats:** Improved Initiative

**Environment:** Warm underground

**Organization:** Solitary

**Challenge Rating:** 5

**Treasure:** None

**Alignment:** Always neutral evil

**Advancement:** 4-6 HD (Small); 7-9 HD (Medium)

**Level Adjustment:** —

*You see before you a billowy translucent cloud. Occasionally the tendrils of the cloud will coalesce into the face of a kender child with intense facial expressions of happiness or of stark terror.*

The giggler is the spirit of a kender child that died in a tragic manner. Not ready to move on this mischievous spirit attaches itself to an individual and considers them to be its new best friend. The giggler is always completely invisible and incorporeal when it first begins to follow its "friend."

Gigglers are insatiably mischievous and love to play pranks. They always begin small, first by picking up small objects and move them into new locations or by whispering short messages or giggling in the ear of their new friend just as they are falling asleep. After a few days of these minor annoyances the giggler will move on to larger pranks such as calling for help and leading their friend into danger. Sometimes they will annoy nearby creatures or take things from other humanoids and plant them on their friend so as to get their friend in trouble.

If at any time the friend discovers the presence of the giggler or attempts to make contact with it the spirit will become enraged and show itself. When angered it becomes visible as a shadowy insubstantial cloud in which the facial expression of the child kender can be seen displaying intense expressions of laughter, terror or anger. They speak common and kender-speak.

## COMBAT

Once a giggler has been discovered it throws a tantrum and will use its telekinesis ability to hurl objects at its victim. If possible it will attempt to kill the victim by dropping heavy objects on them.

**Telekinesis (Sp):** The giggler may use Telekinesis as a standard action (caster level 12th). When a giggler uses this power it must wait 1d4 rounds before using it again.

**Natural Invisibility (Su):** Gigglers are naturally invisible. A *see invisibility* spell will reveal a rolling cloud with glimpses of child-like faces within it. An *invisibility purge* spell will cause the creature to become visible for 1d4 rounds before it returns to its natural state. If a giggler becomes angry it will often drop its invisibility.

**Telepathy (Su):** A giggler may communicate telepathically with any other creature from up to 60ft. away.





# The Scaled Society

## Caustic Minions

—Written by Terry Doetzel



*he flat of his hand hit the back of his neck with a resounding smack. The dozens of mosquitoes that had been feeding there were crushed, and left Colin Dinx's hand smeared with his own blood. The Legionnaire of Steel was knee-deep in the muddy and stagnant water of the swamp of Sable the Black, a creature of mad genius and terrifying power. The bugs however were a welcome annoyance, for they distracted him from the possibility that at any moment he and his companion could stumble across a creature, or worse, that a creature could find them, and drag them under the water with a tentacle, or bite him in half with a cavernous maw...*

Colin broke off his idle thoughts. If one of Sable's creatures found him he would know soon enough... subtle, they weren't. Besides, he and his partner Geoff had fought and slain an Ogre Titan, for Takhisis' sake. He was sure that they could handle anything this swamp would throw at them.

Suddenly Colin felt woozy, and stumbled in the stagnant water. He felt his partner's hands grab him, and drag him onto a rock jutting up from the muck. "I think we've traveled far enough for now," Geoff said. "Are you all right?"

It was then that Colin felt it. "My leg," he slurred, "something is moving against my leg."

Geoff cut open his partner's pant leg, revealing a large leech-like creature attached to his calf. Damn it all but if that creature didn't make a screech that could wake the dead when Geoff stabbed it with his knife! "Here, drink this," he

said as he handed Colin a flask. "It will help with the pain when I dig the creature's teeth out of your leg."

"Get on with it then," Colin said as he took a swig. The whisky had an odd taste to it, but it warmed his belly readily enough. Soon he felt his muscles relax and go numb. He didn't even feel the knife working as Geoff worked. In fact, he couldn't feel anything at all. He couldn't move.

"Ah, so the paralytic agent has done its work already," Geoff said as he pulled out a small whistle from his vest. After blowing it three times, he asked: "If you can still speak, it will mean that the formula is a complete success."

"Why... are... you... doing this?" Colin croaked.

"You are a very strong man," his erstwhile friend replied. "You will survive where others will not, and you will divulge your body's secrets to my mistress."

"How long...?"

"How long have I served Sable? Ever since I realized how wonderful she was."

### INTRODUCTION

The Scaled Society serves the black Dragon Overlord Onysabiet and ensures that the neighboring realms around her swampy domain are ripe for exploitation. Powerful and influential individuals are subverted to her will, and they in turn spin the wheels of civil society to ensure that the defenders of humanity are powerless to stop her. Sable herself pulls the strings of these puppeteers by impregnating them with her own personality, and thus, members of the society as a whole tend to share her interest in alchemical and magical lore, as well as her desire for domination and power.

Given the fractured and divided nations of Krynn, and their inability to ally and trust each other after so many years of war and catastrophe, it is not surprising that the attitudes towards the servitors of Sable are mixed. In some realms the members of the Scaled Society are ruthlessly hunted and eliminated. In others, they are grudgingly negotiated with, on the basis that the agents of Sable are better kept in plain sight. In a few places where communities have chosen to court the Dragon Overlord's favor, the Society may even serve leadership roles.



## BRIEF HISTORY

The Dragon Overlord Onysablet created many enemies from her ambitions to discover the secrets of life and death without compassion for the living things she chooses as her experiments. Since even the sentient races are so clearly inferior to her, both intellectually and physically, the only benefit to experimenting on them over animals is that these test subjects could give her useful feedback over what the experiments were doing to them.

Things changed however when a young girl named Mina destroyed a Dragon Overlord even more powerful than herself, Malystrixx. Studying this dangerous, hairless ape, Sable realized that the successes of this individual were due to the love and loyalty she inspired in her followers, and an alliance with something called a "deity". The power granted by these powerful, transcendent beings to their followers also made them dangerous enough to threaten her. Clearly then, to survive and maintain her power, Sable needed allies of her own.

Since emotions are defined by the Dragon Overlord as mere bio-chemical impulses influencing behavior, she deduced that the mix of love and fear that Mina inspired in her followers could be reproduced synthetically. Horrifyingly, she was correct. Laying enchantments on a scale shed from her own hide, she was able to bond it to living test subjects, who then became enflamed with the same goals and interests as Sable herself. What is more, as a result of being impregnated with Sable's personality, they adored what Sable herself most loved - her own genius. Thus, the loyalty of her new "allies" could be trusted as much as she trusted herself.

Carefully choosing and selecting agents which she considered to be the most useful and adept, she was quickly able to expand her influences into the courts, temples, and places of learning throughout the Newsea region. The schemes and counsel of these agents pacified the realms that were her immediate neighbors, and wealth began to pour in as tribute for their lives. As well, test subjects, who had previously been in sporadic supply, became much more plentiful, either legitimately purchased, or given as gifts by those that wished to curry her favor or avoid her wrath.

Now that the prisons and slave markets are open to her, Sable can concentrate on trying to achieve power and immortality through her discoveries.

## THE ORGANIZATION

**Headquarters:** The city of Shrentak which is deep in the heart of Sable's realm. However, cells of Scaled Society members exist in any place that the Dragon Overlord wishes to have spies or influence.

**Members:** Nearly 1,000 individuals are knowing, willing, and active members of the Scaled Society. Countless more serve members of the society without knowing their true affiliation.

**Hierarchy:** Sable sends agents into a target region, who in turn recruit other influential members of society to create a cell. However, since she has far more important things to do, each cell determines its leadership independently. Sable does not care, as long as the leadership is competent, and the

leader's loyalty is assured by wearing one of her scales. In fact, Sable encourages power struggle and assassination within the cells, as she feels that this will weed out the weak.

**Leader:** Onysablet commonly referred to as Sable, the Dragon Overlord of Shrentak (for full statistics see page 218 of *Age of Mortals*).

**Religion:** Members of the Scaled Society tend to favor the inner discoveries of mysticism and the raw elemental powers of sorcery to the mysteries of the lunar deities or the revealed knowledge of the other gods. However, Sable has made pacts with the church of Morgion, whose clerics are now frequently found in the company of otyugh (see the *Monster Manual*, page 204), a creature she created. Some clerics and worshippers of Chemosh are also found among the society, leading many to fear that Sable may have turned to studying the secrets of the dead, as well as those of the living.

**Alignment:** CE, NE, LE.

**Symbol:** None. However, the scale that Sable has bonded her servants' flesh (usually on their chests) serves as an identifying mark.

## LOCATIONS AND BASES OF POWER

Individual cells comprise the basic units of the Society's organizational structure. Each cell shares the same long-term goals of gaining magical lore and experimental subjects for their mistress and undermining resistance to her rule. However, the segmented nature of the organization and the wide variety of immediate interests ensures that the membership and methods may differ radically from cell to cell. As such, they are all directed by one or more "dragon apostles", powerful warriors and magic-users that are bound to her body and soul. While they do her bidding they do not speak in her name or carry her authority, for Sable rightly feels that they would be less cautious and effective if they felt they had the power of her unstoppable force behind them.

A sample of the activities and goals of the Scaled Society in various regions is given below.

**Abanasinia:** Abanasinia has always been a land of relative freedom and independence, and thus is slow to form a resistance to outside attacks. However, the same independence that makes Abanasinia easy to conquer also makes it difficult to enslave. Thus, the Society is content merely to watch and recruit members among the wealthier merchants and petty nobility of the region until Sable is ready to conquer it.

The notable exception to this is the fear in which Sable holds a young charismatic religious leader named Kretus (CG human male Mys 13/Righteous Zealot 5) who is in hiding somewhere in the Sentinel Mountains. With the success of the enigmatic dark cleric Mina in slaying the more powerful overlord Malystrixx, Sable fears that this man will unify the heroic people of Abanasinia and threaten her.

Thus, Society members are looking for a way to destroy him before he grows too powerful.

**Blöde:** Many ogre magi, jealous that Dauroth has not shared the power of the Titans, have allied with the black Dragon Overlord. In this realm, where evil has held sway for thousands of years, adventurers are predictably left with a



bitter choice. They must choose between the two great evils, or play an almost suicidal game of encouraging the two factions to destroy each other.

Those interested in contacting the Scaled Society in Blöten would probably do well to make inquiries at Grim Kedar's Apothecary, and talk to its proprietor Kal'zet (male ogre Clr 9; AL NE, Healing +10, Brew Potions +9). Due to the power of the Titans, and the fanatical loyalty that almost all ogres hold for them, discretion and proof of one's sincerity is required to ensure that a visitor is not quickly silenced.

**Blodehelm:** This land lies directly on the borders of Sable's swamp, and is thus firmly under her control. The Scarecrow King Otus (LG human male Mys 8), so called because of his gaunt frame and features ruined by drink, is desperately trying to keep the Society from performing an outright coup. The biggest snake in that nest of vipers is Duke Haydar Balshem (CE human male Ftr 5/Dragon Apostle 9), who is daily drawing more followers into his camp. King Otus, a talented mystic with the power to discern lies and detect the evil of men, is helpless to do anything but send away his advisors, soldiers, and family as he watches the taint of Sable's evil consume them one by one.

He has narrowly avoided such a fate himself, for seared onto his chest is one of Sable's scales. As such, he has begun to see flashes of a dark future where he rules over a monstrous empire of gloom as the great black dragon's puppet emperor. Between his visions, his drinking, and his growing isolation King Otus is slowly being driven to insanity.

**Missing City:** The Legion of Steel is still aghast that one of their own could have turned traitor much less such a high ranking member. Thus, the best covert military unit on the continent is in disarray at its dealings with Sable. The former friends and allies of Geoff Trundle (CE human male Ftr 2/Sor 5/Legionaire 1/Legionaire Sorcerer 3/Legionaire Scout 3) who are still within the organization are finding their activities under intense scrutiny. Many fear that Sable has more agents within the organization, or that Geoff himself has assumed a new identity within the organization due to his sorcerous abilities and legion training. In any event, he knows many of their codes, safe-houses, secret identities, and other information that could compromise their entire resistance.

**New Coast:** The plainsmen of the New Coast are in a state of civil war due to the machinations of Sable and the Scaled Society. Some tribal leaders, believing the Scaled Society's promises of power, have accepted the scale and have become dragon disciples. To prove their value and gain the favour needed to continue their metamorphosis, they raid each other for captives to offer to Sable as tribute.

The most aggressive tribe of those tribes, the Lildukka, is led by a nomad shaman named Howling Coyote (CE nomad human male Mys 5/Nomad Shaman 4/Dragon Apostle 9). He has led his people into a fever pitch of fanaticism and bloodlust by glorifying his own transformation into a dragon-like creature. He seeks to unite all the tribes of plainsmen of New Coast under his banner so that he can proceed to Schallsea and Abanasinia with fire and sword.

**Sanction:** Taking advantage of Hogan Bight's absence, Sable seeks to claim the motley assortment of farmers, merchants and mercenaries who make up the city council. However, members of the Society of the Scale quickly came into conflict with a cabal of sorcerers known only as the "Sivakith", who are masters of illusory magic. Many wonder when the constant sniping between the two groups will end, and when an outright magical battle on the streets of Sanction will begin.

**Other:** Sable has small cells scattered in other places, but is making no significant advances into territories not mentioned above. The goals of particular cells usually revolve around trying to collect new magical items or creatures for Sable's menagerie, the study of biology and anatomy, slaving, and spreading discord among stable and civilized societies that might prove strong enough to threaten their mistress. Of particular interest to Sable are the newly revived Orders of High Sorcery. She feels that by planting a member of the society within the conclave she might succeed where her fellow Dragon Overlord Beryllintranox failed, in gaining access to the ancient secrets of the Tower of Wayreth.

## MOTIVATION AND GOALS

Since the members of the Scaled Society all are impregnated with Sable's personality due to the scales magically bonded to their flesh, their goals and desires are the same as hers. So while Scaled Society cells differ widely in the schemes and goals of the particular moment, all of their members share certain characteristics no matter what their profession or social position. To understand these characteristics, you have to understand the Dragon Overlord herself.

Primarily, as a matter of biological destiny due to her exalted status as a superior species, Sable desires her own survival. Before the War of Souls, humanoids were considered by the great black dragon to be clever and industrious little creatures, but a species that was on its way to extinction with the emergence of draconic power. She has been forced to re-evaluate this opinion, after the re-emergence of the gods and the role humanity played in the destruction of the three most powerful dragons to fly over the world of Krynn. It has become clear to her that the humanoids are a species of tenaciousness and hidden power, and thus the Scaled Society is a means to turn humanity's strength into a weapon to ensure her own survival. Members of the Scaled Society strive to ensure her survival by subverting or scattering any resistance against her.

Secondly, Sable desires the secrets of life and death. As she is herself of a scholarly bent, almost all of her servants are students of arcana, biology, medicine, metaphysics, and many other humanities and sciences. You might find a cell of the Scaled Society attempting to compile an encyclopaedia of the anatomy of all humanoids, seeking forgotten bits of lore in the ruins of past ages, or even performing gruesome exploratory and transformative experiments on victims of their own. They will do anything to add to Sable's already vast knowledge.



## RECRUITING

Since the scale that each member wears assures their loyalty, one would assume that the society is rather casual about whom it recruits. However, while forced servitude is not unknown within the society (usually a punishment reserved for talented adversaries) it is not as common as one might think. Aside from the possibility of one being strong-willed enough to overthrow the magical influence (such as King Otus), heroes also generally have friends or kinfolk who would tear the organization apart trying to reclaim the lost soul.

The Scaled Society finds it much more convenient to recruit people who are already possess of dark ambition, particularly those of a magical or scientific bent. Thus members of the society can most often be found among those with the leisure time for academic study, such as merchants, clerics, and nobles. As well, they can be found in places of learning, such as monasteries, academies of sorcery, and universities.

## ALLIES

Sable's allies are few, and the Scaled Society was primarily an experiment in gaining more. Now that the experiment has proven to be a success, she would be a fool not to give them the tools to fulfill her goals, and Sable is no fool. Thus, Society members often have access to a frightening menagerie of her creations (usually of the aberration creature type) as well as dragonspawn for muscle. These creatures in her ranks have swelled recently, as many of the green, red and blue dragonspawn belonging to other slain overlords have sought shelter with her.

Outside of the Society, Sable is involved in an alliance of convenience with the churches of Chemosh and Morgion (who share many of Sable's goals) but neither the clerics nor the society fully trust each other. This lack of trust is

### The Scaled Society: Tips for the DM

The Scaled Society is the means in which the Dragon Overlord Sable extends her influence subtly in the Newsea region without disturbing the lesser beings to mass against her. As such, the Society only operates openly in areas where their influence is so pervasive that no serious threat exists against them.

Since the Scaled Society is involved in many regions and cities across Sable, all gathering information and plotting domination, a cell can be found almost anywhere. Since Sable recruits primarily among the powerful, even if an adventurer is suspicious of a possible Society member, they may find their foe protected by his rank, office, wealth or reputation.

It is also important to remember that the Scaled Society is the inner circle of Sable's plans, not the whole of it. Thus, adventurers might encounter numerous characters and groups working for the Scaled Society but not belonging to it (and thus not wearing one of Sable's scales). The involvement of the society can be traced however due to the type of creatures found among encounters (aberrations and reptilian creatures), as well as certain items and devices that serve as "calling cards".

common among "allies" who don't serve Sable directly, so her followers often keep their hirelings in the dark about their true goals and motivations.

The bakali however serve Sable loyally and well. A dying race, they have begun to flourish under Sable's wing, and in her swampy realm. Captive draconians (whose blood is a necessary component of creating dragonspawn) are becoming more and more difficult to find. Thus bakali have become increasingly useful, serving as foot soldiers, guards, and keepers of prized specimens, as well as forming slaving parties when conventional sources of specimens do not flow quickly enough to meet Sable's demand.

Finally, a key part of Sable's forces includes chromatic dragons, usually lesser black dragons like herself. However, she also has a few dozen green dragons among her number, and many red dragons in the Khalkist Mountains pay homage to her. Sable has no illusions about their loyalty however, since they serve her only to escape the fate of becoming another skull in her Totem.

## ENEMIES

Chief among Sable's enemies are the Legion of Steel, and thus she is delighted at the confusion and disarray into which Geoff Trundle's conversion has thrown that organization's efforts against her. However, this might have ultimately been a mistake, for the Legion of Steel is quickly adapting to this setback, and has gained the proper respect for its draconic nemesis. Alarmed at her waxing power, the Legion of Steel has made it a priority to counter the Scaled Society outside of her swampy domain, particularly in Abanasinia.

Sable herself has developed a real fear of the Knights of Neraka and their charismatic leader Mina. With the death of three Dragon Overlords through the actions of this knighthood, who had ostensibly been serving the Dragon Overlords as hired muscle, Sable has grown to fear at least one group of these lesser creatures. Thus, she has cast out the Knights of Neraka from any realm where she holds direct influence, and is keeping a wary eye on their movements.

Her closest neighbours, the ogres of Blöde, also have a good reason to hate her. During the War of the Lance, the ogres had conquered the fertile plains to the southwest of their kingdom, and had set up extensive plantations worked by slaves gathered from the citizens of Blodehelm and the tribesmen of New Coast. The newly constructed port city of Shrentak was a great source of wealth for the Chieftains of Blöde, where commodities and slaves flowed out into the Newsea, and gold and steel poured in.

When Sable arrived on Ansalon, she decided that the city of Shrentak was ideal as her new home, as the buildings that were designed to hold slaves would be perfect to hold unwilling specimens for test subjects. Thus, the slaves and their ogre masters became Sable's first creatures. The splendid manors that were built on the backs of slaves are now sinking into the swamps, becoming the moldering lairs



for bakali lizardmen, deranged sorcerers, and numerous abominations of Sable's own creation.

While some dragons have chosen to serve Sable rather than be slain, there are many others, both good and evil, who have vowed revenge for slain parents, children, and mates. Since Sable is too powerful to oppose directly, many dragons have taken to hiding in humanoid form, sponsoring adventurers to strike at vulnerable targets in Sable's network, and paying for it with treasure out of their own hordes.

The draconians also have good reason to hate Sable, as they approached her with offers of service, and she callously used them to create black dragonspawn, a draconic creature that was, in her eyes, more "perfect".

## ENCOUNTERS

Encounters with the Scaled Society tend to be tricky affairs for adventurers, since Society members will rarely engage in combat unless they have already rigged the encounter to be in their favor. As such, most of the time adventurers will come upon Society members either in their lairs, or in the midst of some operation or project. Since Society members generally fear discovery of their activities (being as they usually violate basic human decency) they tend to have an escape route prepared. While Scaled Society members are pragmatic about their own lives, they will not hesitate to sacrifice their underlings to achieve victory or make good their escape. Sable, being of genius intellect, will forgive failure if she can determine that it didn't come about through bungling, neglect or cowardice.

## SAMPLE GROUPS

- **Barbarian Raiders:** (EL 4) — 1 dragon shaman (CE human Mys 2), 2 followers (CE human Bbn 1).
- **Bakali Slavers:** (EL 6) — 1 bakali leader (CE bakali Bbn 2), 3 slavers (CE bakali Bbn 1).
- **Scholarly Circle:** (EL 8) — 1 doctor (CE human Exp 4/Rog 3), 1 sorcerer (CE human Sor 4), 2 students (CE human Exp 2/Sor 2/Rog 1).
- **Noble Retinue:** (EL 10) — 1 noble (CE human Nbl 7), 1 chamberlain (CE human Ftr 6) or 1 black dragonspawn (CE black dragonspawn Ftr 4), 2 bodyguards (CE human Bbn 2, Ftr 2 or Rgr 2).
- **Covert Unit:** (EL 12) — 1 team leader (CE human Rog 9), 1 magi (CE human Sor 8 or Wiz 8), 2 operatives (CE human Rog 8).
- **Assassins:** (EL 14) — 1 "Claw of Sable" (CE human Mnk 7/Ass 4), 1 poisoner (CE human Rog 10, Craft: Alchemy +13), 2 "Talons of Sable" (CE human Rog 6/Ass 4).
- **Sorcerer Cabal:** (EL 16) — 1 arcane master (CE human Sor 13), 3 other arcanists (CE human Sor 12 or Wiz 12).

## HOW SOCIETY MEMBERS ACT

**Assassin:** Focused and silent, working only to quickly and surgically remove problematic individuals. Trained to the

peak of physical and mental perfection, they are proud to consider themselves the tools in Sable's talons.

**Abanasinian Noble:** These are largely petty lords who have thrown in their lot with Sable in order to settle feuds with neighbors that may be generations old. In so doing, they hope to gain control of grander estates than the minor fiefdoms or merchant houses which they already own. As such, they are consumed with these ceaseless conflicts, which they seek to resolve with poison, intrigue, and barbarian allies.

**Bakali Slavers:** While the bakali are not members of the Scaled Society, many serve and flourish within Sable's swampy domain. As such, they are sometimes found hunting for captives on the outskirts of Sable's swamps.

**Barbarian Raiders:** The barbarians have come to believe that their people have a destiny of conquest ahead of them by serving the great black dragon, who they fanatically revere as a goddess. While very few of them (chieftains and shamans mostly) are members of the Scaled Society, many do "muscle work" with other Scaled Society allies for mutual benefit.

**Blodehelm Noble:** Most of these men have lived under the power of Sable from birth, and thus have come to see as their birthright the oversight of the torment and oppression of their subjects. As such, most of the nobles who are members of the Scaled Society have begun to transform themselves and their followers into dragonspawn.

**Covert Agent:** Deception is second nature to these men and women, often leading double lives for years without anyone knowing their true nature. Given their talents for lying and telling people what they want to hear, they are often advisors in military and political organizations.

**Scholar:** Brilliant and sagacious, but lacking all comprehension of remorse or ethics. At the forefront of the new sciences, they are not only found in places of learning, but are as often founding them as well.

**Sorcerer or Wizard:** Ruthless in their pursuit of arcane lore, often losing more and more of their own humanity to their magic, these servants usually prefer spells dealing with necromancy or transmutation.

## COMBAT AND TACTICS

As shown by the wide variety of characters in the Society, and where they operate, it is not surprising that every cell has varying means of engaging and destroying their enemies. As said previously however, they generally tend to avoid combat and if forced into a situation where violent confrontation is necessary, favor ambushes and an easy escape. To further rig the odds in their favor they are liberal in their use of poisons, either secretly used on victims before the battle even begins, or in the opening rounds of combat delivered via blowgun needles or hand crossbow bolts. If they have spellcasters, spells such as ray of enfeeblement, crushing despair, or symbol of weakness are used to soften up their opponents. The desire for members of the society to take captives can work to an adventurer's advantage, but it is rare that Society members underestimate their opponents.



## STRENGTH AND WEAKNESSES

The greatest strength of the Scaled Society is the fact that most of its members are wealthy, extremely intelligent, and have access to manpower and other resources as a result of their social position. However, due to the fact that they are society's elite, this also means that they are few in number and often lack the strength needed to fight openly. As such, and given that discovery outside of Sable's realms leaves them exposed to swift retribution, the Scaled Society is understandably very keen on secrecy.

## SPECIAL ITEMS AND SUPERNATURAL ABILITIES

### MUNDANE ITEMS

Item	Price
Belt of Utility	250 gp
Snaring Staff	20 gp
Syringe	1,000 gp
Syringe, Stealth	1,500 gp

**Belt of Utility:** This useful item is a favorite of sorcerers, as it makes potions, wands and scrolls easily accessible during combat situations. Thus, this item grants the ability to draw potions and wands as a free action. Drinking a potion and invoking a wand still requires a standard action. A typical utility belt can hold up to 4 scrolls, 4 potions and 2 wands.

**Staff of Snaring:** This cleverly designed device is intended to make the capture of unarmed humans easier. A stout rod about four feet in length, it contains a loop of steel cable on the end which, when pulled tight, will help restrain even the strongest of men. To slip free one must use the Escape Artist skill (DC 30). To break the cable requires a strength check (DC 26). The cable has a hardness of 10, and 10hp, while the staff itself has a hardness of 5 and 10hp. When used in a trip attack, the staff confers a +2 bonus, and can otherwise be wielded as a club.

**Syringe:** This device is designed to inject poisons directly into a character's bloodstream. As such, all injury poisons have a +2 DC when administered by this syringe.

**Syringe of Stealth:** This syringe is so small and well-crafted that when used in a surprise attack, in conjunction with a successful sleight of hand check (vs. the opponent's spot check), it can inject the target with a toxin without the opponent even being aware of the strike. If the victim makes a successful spot check (DC 15) they notice the prick of the needle. All poison injected with this syringe, due to the reduced dosage, has its DC reduced by 2.

### ALCHEMICAL ACIDS AND POISONS

The cost of raw materials for all alchemical products is 1/6 of the cost of the market value when the materials are common, and 1/3 of the market value when the materials are rare. All

Craft (alchemy) checks require the use of an alchemist's laboratory.

**Black Dragon Acid:** Gathered from the saliva of the numerous black dragons under Sable's employ, these vials are particularly effective against heavily armored opponents such as the Knights of Solamnia, Knights of Nereka, and the Legion of Steel. When hurled (as a ranged touch attack with a range increment of 10 feet), this acid does 4d4 points of acid damage to any armor worn. Any damage remaining after the armor is destroyed is applied to the character in the armor. Unarmored characters have the acid applied to any clothing they are wearing. A slain black dragon can provide enough acid for 1 vial per age category, but Scaled Society members usually have access to living sources.

Price: 1,500 gp; Craft (alchemy) DC: 27.

**Green Dragon Gas:** Milked from the glands of young green dragons in Sable's service, this biochemical product reacts with air to produce a poisonous gas. If opened or smashed a typical dosage can create a 10-foot radius cloud, and causes 6d6 points of damage to all who inhale it in the area of effect. If caught in the area of effect, creatures can attempt a Reflex save for half damage (DC 16). A slain green dragon can produce one vial per age category, but Scaled Society members usually have access to living sources.

Price: 3,000 gp; Craft (alchemy) DC: 30.

**Opium:** Originating most often from the manorial estates of the unscrupulous aristocratic families of Haven, this drug is sold by Scaled Society members to raise liquid capital, but is more commonly used by scientists to numb the pain their experiments cause to their test subjects. While under the influence of opium you only take half damage from non-lethal attacks and subtract 1 point from all normal damage rolls (to a minimum of 1) but are otherwise not fully alert to the world around suffering a -1 penalty to all attacks, saves and checks.

Price: 500 gp; Craft (alchemy) DC: 18.

**Paralytic Poison:** Created by Geoff Trundle, the traitor to the Legion of Steel, this paralytic poison is now often used to render victims paralyzed and helpless, so that they can easily be captured. Since this poison allows a person to continue speaking (if haltingly) it is also useful for interrogation.

Price: 3,000 gp; Craft (alchemy) DC: 20.

**Surgical Anaesthetic:** A standard anaesthetic that is used to send subjects and patients into slumber in order to plumb the secrets within their bodies. Assassins and rogues in the Scaled Society have started using it on daggers and crossbow bolts as well, in order to infiltrate an area quickly and quietly.

Price: 120gp; Craft (alchemy) DC: 15.

**Weakness Gas:** This gas is used by slavers to weaken their victims so that they can be grappled and bound. It produces a 20 ft. radius cloud that saps the strength of all who inhale it.

Price: 2,500 gp; Craft (alchemy) DC: 25.

**Wyvern Venom:** This venom is particularly prized not only for the effects it has in weakening the body, but in weakening the body's ability to resist the magical and medical changes imposed by the society's demented researchers.

Price: 3,000 gp; Craft (alchemy) DC: 25.



## Scale Talismans and NPC equipment

When creating an NPC belonging to the Scaled Society (or just wearing a scale talisman) it is important to note that the scale technically belongs to the Dragon Overlord (whose resources should be considered limitless), not the character who wears it. Since it does not grant the character any additional advantages or abilities, it should not be considered part of the NPC's equipment or treasure.

## MAGICAL ITEMS

**Canopic Amulet:** When draconians imprisoned by Sable have exhausted their usefulness in creating dragonspawn, they are often disposed of, in a safe manner that does not trigger the magical explosions of their death throes. However, their hearts are often kept preserved encased in amber, with all of their innate arcane energy contained within.

When these jars are worn around the neck, the bearer gains the draconian's death throes ability when reduced to 0 or fewer hit points (see *Dragonlance Campaign Setting*, pages 215-222). When the death throes is activated, the wearer's body is destroyed and cannot be raised by any means short of resurrection or wish.

Moderate Necromancy; CL 11th; Craft Wondrous Item, contingency, gentle repose; Price: 3,300 gp (baaz, kapak, and bozak), 4,950 gp (aurak and sivak); Cost to create: 1,650 gp + 132 XP (baaz, kapak, and bozak), 2,475 gp + 198 XP (aurak and sivak).

**Manual of Arcane Anatomy:** This book contains numerous drawings of anatomical figures, as well as detailed explanations of the new science of surgical medicine being pioneered by Sable's followers. As such, with the application of a healer's kit, you can restore 1d6 hit points per character level of the patient on a successful heal check (DC 20). A surgical operation takes 1d4 hours.

Moderate Necromancy, CL 11th; Craft Wondrous Item, heal; Price: 13,200gp; Cost to create: 6,600 gp + 528 XP.

**Scale Talisman of Corruption:** Dragon Overlords frequently use their own scales in various talismans or bond them directly onto a character's flesh. Either way, the talisman cannot be removed once worn. Unless the wearer makes a Will save (DC 15) the alignment of the character shifts to match the alignment of the dragon whose scale it came from. As well, the wearer will regard the Dragon Overlord with feelings of awe and admiration, and is thus willing to serve her. While the charm effects (and the scale itself) can be removed with a successful remove curse, the

alignment shift cannot be undone with anything less than a miracle or wish.

Strong Enchantment; CL 12th; Create Wondrous Item, charm person, creator must be a dragon; Price: 20,000 gp. Cost to create: 10,000 + 400 XP.

**Scale Talisman of Obedience:** These have all the features of Scale Talismans of Corruption but they also have the added advantage of allowing the Dragon Overlord to command the character bonded to the talisman as if under the influence of a permanent dominate person spell, unless the target succeeds at a Will save (DC 30). Note that since the Dragon Overlord must spend at least one round each day to renew the domination, such magical items are comparatively rare.

Strong Enchantment; CL 12th, Create Wondrous Item, dominate person, creator must be a dragon; Price: 240,000 gp; Cost to create: 120,000 gp + 9,600 XP.

**Vivisectionist's Scalpel:** +1 keen scalpel (1d3 damage) that is prized by surgeons that desire to flay the skin and flesh off of a subject in order to see the workings of the body while the subject is still alive.

Moderate transmutation; CL 10th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, keen edge; Price: 8304 gp; Cost to create: 4,152 gp + 332 XP.

## PRESTIGE CLASS:

### DRAGON APOSTLE

**Description:** While most reviled the Dragon Overlords, some began to view these immensely powerful and seemingly invincible creatures with reverence. By gifting followers with their own scales, the overlords could imbue some of their followers with magical power. Worn either as medallions or grafted onto their follower's flesh, the scales of the overlords gave their possessors the ability to undergo a path of transformation into creatures which were a reflection of their master's draconic power.

More physically powerful and stable than other dragonspawn who were usually transformed against their will with ritual magic, these apostles serve as the aides and ambassadors to the overlords, as well as their most elite soldiers and assassins. Most dragon apostles are powerful fighters, nobles and barbarian leaders. While many wizards and sorcerers serve the Dragon Overlords, most do not wish to neglect their studies in magic in exchange for mastering a more powerful physical form.

Poison	Type	DC	Initial Damage	Secondary Damage
Black Dragon Acid	Contact	-	4d4 hp	None
Green Dragon Gas	Inhaled	-	6d6 hp, 10ft. radius	None
Opium	Inhaled	18	1d6 Dex + 1d4 Int	1d4 Dex + 1d2 Int
Paralytic Poison	Injury/Ingested	16	1d4 Strength	Paralysis
Surgical Anesthetic	Injury/Ingested	13	Unconsciousness 1 min.	Unconsciousness 2d4 hrs.
Weakening Gas	Inhaled	13	1d4 Strength, 20ft. Radius	2d4 Strength
Wyvern Venom	Injury	17	2d6 Constitution	2d6 Constitution



## Requirements

To qualify to become a Dragon Apostle, a character must fulfill the following criteria.

**Alignment:** Any non-Good

**Base Attack Bonus:** +5

**Languages:** Draconic

**Race:** Any without the Dragon type

**Special:** Must serve a dragon possessing a skull totem, and possess one of that dragon's own enchanted scales (see Special Items and Supernatural Abilities).

## Class Skills

The Dragon Apostle's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Escape Artist (Dex), Gather Information (Cha), Intimidate (Cha) Knowledge (all skills, taken individually) (Int), Spellcraft (Int) and Spot (Wis).

## Class Features

**Bonus Spells:** Dragon Apostles gain the ability to cast a small number of spells. Every second level they gain the ability to cast a spell chosen from the arcane spell list. A dragon apostle can choose a 1st level arcane spell with the 1st level of his prestige class, a 2nd level arcane spell at 3rd level, a 3rd level arcane spell at 5th level, a 4th level arcane spell at 7th level, and finally a 5th level spell at the 9th level of the prestige class. They can cast each of these spells once per day.

**Other Class Features:** Aside from the differences noted here, the Dragon Apostle otherwise functions the same as the Dragon Disciple prestige class (*Dungeon Master's Guide*, Chapter 6: Characters, "Prestige Classes").



In addition to the *Dragonlance Campaign Setting* and *Age of Mortals* books, which are necessary to any campaign, Dungeon Masters may wish to look at the *Draconomicon* for rules, suggestions and flavour text to emphasize the draconic overtones of this society and its master. As well, the *Fiend Folio* has templates for creature grafts and symbionts (pages 207-222), which would be useful to any mad scientist. †



### About the Author

Terry Doetzel is bracing for another school year at the University of Saskatchewan after a summer of hard work and hard living. He is currently finishing off a degree in history and classics, and will return to school next year to start a degree in political science. Aside from D&D he enjoys aggressive sports, homemade brew, beautiful women, and the meditations of the rosary.





# Dragonlance Unearthed

## Racial Levels for the Dragonlance Campaign

—Written by Trampas Whiteman



*he concept of racial levels is becoming increasingly more popular. It was used in **Savage Species** for monstrous*

*characters, then used in Monte Cook's **Arcana Unearthed: A Variant Player's Handbook** as something to be used with standard races. Monte later released a PDF download<sup>\*</sup> on how to use racial levels for **Player's Handbook** races.*

This article will take the same concept as presented in *Arcana Unearthed*, and apply it to a sampling of some of Krynn's most popular races. Standard races, such as elves and dwarves, will not be presented, as the PDF download mentioned above covers these races already. Instead, this article will focus on Dragonlance-specific races.

### GULLY DWARF

Gully Dwarves can take up to three levels in "Gully Dwarf" at any time. Not all Gully Dwarves, however, take racial levels (or all three of them).

**Hit Die:** d6

### Skills

**Skill Points at 1st Character Level:** (2 + Intelligence modifier) × 4.

**Skill Points at Higher Levels:** 2 + Intelligence modifier.

<sup>\*</sup> You can find the document here:  
[http://www.montecook.com/images/Racial\\_levels.pdf](http://www.montecook.com/images/Racial_levels.pdf)

**"Class" Skills:** The Gully Dwarf's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Balance (Dex), Climb (Str), Diplomacy (Cha), Escape Artist (Dex), Hide (Dex), Jump (Str), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Survival (Wis), and Tumble (Dex).

### Class Features

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** Gully Dwarves are proficient with all simple weapons, and with light armor.

**Self-Sufficient (Ex):** The Gully Dwarf receives the Self-Sufficient feat for free. If the Gully Dwarf already has this feat, he may select another one in its place.

**Hardy (Ex):** The Gully Dwarf's resistance to the effects of disease and poison increases to +4.

**Cornered Rat (Ex):** The Gully Dwarf receives the Cornered Rat feat for free. See the *Dragonlance Campaign Setting* for details. If the Gully Dwarf already has this feat, he may select another in its place.

TABLE 1-1: THE GULLY DWARF

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+0	+0	+2	+0	Self-Sufficient
2	+1	+0	+3	+0	Hardy +4
3	+2	+1	+3	+1	Cornered Rat

### KAGONESTI ELF

Kagonesti Elves can take up to three levels in "Kagonesti" at any time. Not all Kagonesti Elves, however, take racial levels (or all three of them).

**Hit Die:** d8

### Skills

**Skill Points at 1st Character Level:** (2 + Intelligence modifier) × 4.



**Skill Points at Higher Levels:** 2 + Intelligence modifier.

**“Class” Skills:** The Kagonesti Elf’s class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Climb (Str), Handle Animal (Cha), Hide (Dex), Jump (Str), Knowledge (Nature) (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Ride (Dex), Search (Int), Spot (Wis), and Survival (Wis).

## Class Features

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** Kagonesti are proficient with all simple and martial weapons, and with light armor and shields (except tower shields).

**Call of the Wild:** At 1st level, the Kagonesti’s racial bonus to Knowledge (nature) and Survival checks increases to +2.

**Bonus Feat:** At 2nd level, the Kagonesti gains a bonus feat. The feat must be selected from the following list: Animal Affinity, Stealthy, Toughness, or Track.

**Strength Increase:** At 3rd level, the Kagonesti gains a +2 increase to Strength. This is a permanent improvement (similar to the ability score increase gained at every fourth level).

TABLE 1–2: THE KAGONESTI ELF

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+1	+2	+2	+0	Call of the Wild
2	+2	+3	+3	+0	Bonus Feat
3	+3	+3	+3	+1	Strength +2

## Half-Elf

### (Classic Dragonlance Variant)

The Half-Elf, as presented in Monte Cook’s article on racial levels for the *Player’s Handbook* includes levels for the Half-Elf. No rules need to be changed to use Half-Elf racial levels in Dragonlance, although a few tweaks can shape the Half-Elf class to fit the Dragonlance campaign.

The Half-Elf can use his bonus feat for any number of things, although one may wish to focus on archery feats (such as Point Blank Shot). For those Half-Elves who work well in both human and elven societies, they may wish to take feats such as Charming or Haggler (see *Age of Mortals* for details).

The Divided Ancestry ability is highly recommended, as Half-Elves in Dragonlance are divided between two worlds.

The Ability Increase can come into play for fans feeling nostalgic for the days when Dragonlance Half-Elves gained a +2 bonus to Dexterity. However, players should feel free to use the Ability Increase for any stat that they desire.

## GNOME

Gnomes can take up to three levels in “Tinker Gnome” at any time. Not all Gnomes, however, take racial levels (or all three of them).

**Hit Die:** d6

## Skills

**Skill Points at 1st Character Level:** (4 + Intelligence modifier) × 4.

**Skill Points at Higher Levels:** 4 + Intelligence modifier.

**“Class” Skills:** The Kagonesti Elf’s class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Appraise (Int), Craft (all skills, taken individually) (Int), Decipher Script (Int), Disable Device (Int), Knowledge (all skills, taken individually) (Int), Open Lock (Dex), and Profession (all skills, taken individually) (Int).

## Class Features

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** Kagonesti are proficient with all simple and martial weapons, and with light armor and shields (except tower shields).

**Ability Score Modifier (Ex):** At 1st level and again at 3rd level, the Gnome’s Intelligence increases by one.

**Craftsgnome (Ex):** The Gnome is especially skilled at one Craft skill. At 1st level, the Gnome may add his Gnome racial levels to skill checks with one particular Craft skill.

**Craft Master (Ex):** The Gnome’s bonus to Craft (alchemy) checks increases to +4.

**Master Craftsgnome (Ex):** The Gnome becomes an expert with the Craft skill he applied his Craftsgnome ability to at 1st level, placing his very heart and soul into anything created with that skill. The Gnome adds not only his Gnome racial levels to that particular Craft skill, but also his Charisma modifier.

TABLE 1–3: THE TINKER GNOME

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+0	+0	+2	+0	Ability Score Modification, Craftsgnome
2	+1	+0	+3	+0	Craft Master
3	+2	+1	+3	+1	Ability Score Modification, Master Craftsgnome

## KENDER

Kender can take up to three levels in “Kender” at any time. Not all Kender, however, take racial levels (or all three of them).

**Hit Die:** d6

## Skills

**Skill Points at 1st Character Level:** (4 + Intelligence modifier) × 4.

**Skill Points at Higher Levels:** 4 + Intelligence modifier.

**“Class” Skills:** Balance (Dex), Bluff (Cha), Climb (Str), Disable Device (Int), Escape Artist (Dex), Hide (Dex), Jump (Str), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Open Lock (Dex), Search (Int), Sleight of Hand (Dex), Spot (Wis), and Tumble (Dex).



## Class Features

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** Kender are proficient with all simple weapons and with light armor.

**Bonus Feat:** At 2nd level, the Kender gains Lucky as a bonus feat. See the *Age of Mortals* sourcebook for details.

TABLE 1-4: THE KENDER

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+0	+0	+2	+0	Dexterity +1
2	+1	+0	+3	+0	Bonus Feat
3	+2	+1	+3	+1	Dexterity +1, +2 Attack Bonus with Ranged Weapons

## MINOTAUR

Minotaurs can take up to three levels in “Minotaur” at any time. Not all Minotaurs, however, take racial levels (or all three of them).

**Hit Die:** d10

## Skills

**Skill Points at 1st Character Level:** (2 + Intelligence modifier) × 4.

**Skill Points at Higher Levels:** 2 + Intelligence modifier.

**“Class” Skills:** The Minotaur’s class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Intimidate (Cha), Profession (Sailor) (Wis), Survival (Wis), Swim (Str), Use Rope (Dex).

## Class Features

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** Minotaurs with levels only in minotaur (no actual class levels) are proficient with all simple and martial weapons and with all armor (heavy, medium, and light) and with shields (including tower shields).

**Scent (Ex):** At 2nd level, the Minotaur gains the Scent special quality. See the *Monster Manual* for details.

TABLE 1-5: THE MINOTAUR

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+1	+2	+0	+0	+1 Constitution, Natural Armor (+1 AC)
2	+2	+3	+0	+0	+1 Strength, Scent
3	+3	+3	+1	+1	+1 Strength, +1 Constitution, Natural Attack (+1 attack bonus on gore attacks)



## About the Author

Trampas Whiteman founded the Whitestone Council in January 2001, bringing together a group of talented fans with the purpose of keeping Dragonlance gaming alive and supporting Dragonlance fandom. Alongside co-chair Matthew Haag, Trampas oversees both Dragonlance.com and the Dragonlance Nexus. Trampas is a Kansas City native with a degree in Broadcasting and Film, and has worked in radio, TV, and advertising. Trampas recently spoke at Bertrem's funeral at GenCon 2002, and works as coordinator between the Whitestone Council and Sovereign Press.





# Mortuary Practices of the Peoples of Krynn

## Part One: The Ancient Dead

—Written by John Grubber



*Lord Soth is likely the most well-known undead denizen of our world, but he is by no means the only one of power.*

*His menace lies in his tragic origin, and in the forces he could marshal in battle. There are others though, who suffer the curse of unlife, and hate the living as fervently as the Knight of the Black Rose. Some have chosen this path willingly, while others have been awoken from their slumber. None of these ancient dead are to be trifled with.*

Every culture, every race of intelligence, has burial rituals, even goblins and ogres. These traditions are designed to send the dead to the afterlife, to ensure their release from this world. There are times though, when the rituals go awry, murders go unpunished or the tombs are disturbed and the dead do not rest in peace. In these cases, the dead do not begin their journey, or are called back from the beyond. More than mere animated corpses, these are beings of malevolent intelligence—furious that they cannot leave this world, and angry at those that desecrated their resting place.

They are not inherently evil beings, but they are dangerous to those who wrong them. Each is a unique individual, a product of their life and unlife; these are no mere shambling dead, no mere animated corpses. They have desires and intelligence, they have lived and loved, had experiences across the breadth of time. They bring these to bear in any encounters they have.

The following is only a brief summary of the burial rituals of selected cultures of Ansalon. They have been edited for clarity, and are supplemented with notes on the appearance of the undead themselves, to aid those who encounter them, by choice or chance. The entries have been compiled from longer, more detailed monographs; readers are invited to seek them out for more detailed information on a specific culture.

In the second part of this article, we will focus on mortuary artifacts and monsters that have been discovered, related to the burial customs of Ansalon's peoples.

—Kalan of Thelgaard  
Revered Son of Mishakal

### THE COSMIC EGG: CYCLIC LIFE AND DEATH AMONG THE BAKALI

The lizardfolk of Krynn have undergone great change in their history, and this is shown in their mortuary customs. The tribal lizardmen bundle their dead in vines, tying them into an egg shape before lowering them into deep, water-filled conotes. The cenotes vary in size from small pools to small lakes, their surfaces far below the lip of the hole itself. Some tribes bury their most honored dead in deep vertical shafts, filling it with foods and weapons then sealing it and leaving a simple stone plinth to mark it. Mummies of the tribal bakali are very rare: the jungles reclaim the remains very quickly. Those that do appear look much as they did in life, though withered and gaunt. Vines cover their bodies, looping off them, and moving as though in a breeze. The mummies can control these and other plants around them, using them as tools and weapons to defend the jungles.

The ancient bakali had a much more developed mortuary setting. Their tomb complexes appeared as clusters of domes set upon a walled oval platform, the size determined by the stature of the person buried within. The hierarchical nature of the society laid out strict limits and guidelines for who



would be buried with whom, and where. The bodies of the dead were not preserved at all, instead they were tied into an egg-shaped bundle, and covered with clay. This clay was decorated with tales of the individual's life, enchanted with wards of protection, then left exposed to the sun to dry and harden. Then the funerary procession carried it in a great howdah to the necropolis of the clan, through the arches and statues of the bakali dragon gods, to the domes, where the person was buried according to their station.

The domes themselves were sealed, except during burials, and the clay eggs within were arranged in concentric rings, like a nest. Those that wished to honor the dead visited a shrine and altar elsewhere in the walled complex. There they made offerings to the ancestors for protection and guidance. These ancestors, and other powerful dead, were buried in the center, while those of lower caste ranking were placed around them. Members of other castes were buried in much the same manner in smaller domes surrounding the central large dome. Around the chamber figures and grave goods abound, although any organic material has long since rotted away. The exterior of the domes were stone, painted and decorated with carved relief of the clan's exploits through history.

Ancient lizardfolk mummies appear as more shrunken versions of normal lizardfolk. Their scales hang loosely on their bodies, with pieces of cloth and clay clinging to them. They rarely use weapons, relying on their sheer might and natural claws and teeth, supplemented with a mastery of mystical magic. If awakened, they will come to the aid of any lizardfolk in the region facing persecution. These powerful allies are something many Knights and Silvanesti elves discovered after the Second Dragonwar, when they pursued the bakali into the swamps and jungles to wipe them out.

## IMMORTAL PEOPLES, ETERNAL RITES: ELVEN MORTUARY TRADITIONS

### Fellowship with Nature:

#### Funeral practices among the Kagonesti

The Kagonesti have great veneration for nature and their place in it, and so are content to simply bury their dead unpreserved, marking the spot by carving the name of the dead on a nearby tree or stone formation. They are buried with weapons and possessions, in their finest clothes. They rarely rise, because they are rarely preserved by nature. When they are disturbed and rise from their resting-place, Kagonesti mummies are rotted earth-covered bodies, covered in plant growth, as other mummies are covered in wrappings.

The plants writhe and move over and under their simple clothing, coiling about the body like serpents, and are controlled by the mummy, acting as extra limbs for grappling victims. They are children of the forest, as in life, and will defend it, but immediately afterwards they will begin to dig a new grave in the forest floor, or return to their older resting place and recover themselves.

## Journey of a Lifetime: The Silvanesti

Silvanesti and Qualinesti burial traditions are quite similar, though the latter are not as tradition-bound as the former. In Silvanesti, the dead are kept in crypts when they die, wrapped in spices and scented plants, kept dry to prevent decay. Then, once per year, the dead of the previous year are brought forth to Silvanost, and their bodies placed on small rafts at a set of great stone steps. These rafts are then floated down the great river to the sea, where they rejoin nature.

The dead of Silvanesti usually rise for vengeance only when they have not been allowed to make their appointed voyage on the river. They will mercilessly hunt down those responsible, dragging them to the water and pulling them beneath its surface, carrying them along as they march to the ocean along the riverbed, until they find peaceful rest. Among the Qualinesti, some of the dead are buried, some are floated down the river, while others are cremated.

Contact with humans and other races has broadened the experience of death and mourning among the Qualinesti, giving them the greatest variety of mortuary traditions besides humans.

## A DIVERSITY OF HONOURS: HUMAN MORTUARY PRACTICES

### Tree of Life: Customs of the Plainsmen

There are few trees on the plains of Ansalon—those that do exist are sacred to the people who dwell there. They are venerated as conduits to the gods, to Mishakal and Zivilyn in particular. Some have an added significance though— as mortuary complexes. The plainsfolk place small clay and stone sculptures around the tree, armed with the weapons of their culture. Not all of the figures are human though— some are animals, some are combinations of animal and human, while others are expressive sculptures of spirits and natural forces.

When a plainsman dies, their body is skinned, the bones are wrapped in leathers and scented plants, and tied high in the boughs of the sacred tree. Over time, the body dries out and becomes preserved, the spirit leaving it and rejoining the gods. After a full turning of the year, the bones are removed and buried at the foot of the tree. The remains are undisturbed by animals—only mortals have been foolish enough to desecrate the gravesites, at their own peril.

Plainsfolk mummies are assemblages of bone and soil, held together with scraps of leather and cloth. They exude a sweet odour from the spices of burial, but also a cold, mouldy smell from the earth that interred them. They are easily confused with skeletons, a mistake rarely made twice.

### Chill of the Grave: Rituals of the Icefolk

The mummies of the icefolk are lumbering, stiff-limbed horrors. Covered in skins and furs, their flesh is freeze-dried, pulling their faces into a gruesome rictus, and drawing their nails out into sharp claws. They rarely speak, but when they do, their voices are high-pitched wails, like the howling winds of the Icereach itself. Chill winds and blowing snow seem to surround them, making them difficult to see until it



is too late. They are typically buried in ice or stone cairns, sometimes stretching dozens of feet along the tundra and glaciers. The tombs of the most revered also have caves beneath them, filled with false burial chambers, and grave goods.

## **Fire and Sand: Practices of the Desert Princes**

Mummies of the desert dwellers of Istar are mercifully rare in the days after the Cataclysm, but they are not unheard of. In the days of Istar, those that did rise from their rest were bedecked in the voluminous robes of the desert folk, often hiding their faces behind elaborately carved stone masks. Their skin is leathery and a deep brown from the drying of the sun, though it is surprisingly supple. More than one necromancer has used it to bind spellbooks or create an item of power for themselves. The flexibility and agility of the mummies often come as an unpleasant surprise to those who encounter them.

Upon death, they were placed on high cliff ledges among the mesas of southern Dravinaar. There the sun dried them while their family and professional morticians rubbed their bodies with spices and salves to preserve it. This they did for fourteen days, one day for each of the great tribes. The body was then left alone on the ledge for twenty-one days, one for each of the gods.

After this time, the preserved corpse was hoisted up the cliff further still, to smaller ledges that faced the rising sun, where the body was placed with other family members, in front of a small shrine leading to a chamber of burial goods. Here they remained, the dry winds and hot sun preserving them further. When the light was right, travelers often recalled seeing the glint of armor and weapons, or the stark white of the burial shrouds against the red rock.

## **Mists of Eternity: Customs of the Mountain Folk**

People living high in the mountains of Ansalon have a unique culture, borrowing heavily from the high ogres that enslaved them in the ancient days, but also developing their own traditions in the millennia that have passed since they gained their freedom. Upon dying, the person is sequestered away from society, except for the family, who attend to the preparations over a nine-day period. In this time, the body is arranged, skinned and smoked to preserve it.

The dried skin is then pulverized and mixed with the clay of mountain rivers. The dried body is then wrapped in cloth, items and artifacts secreted within the strips, and finally, covered in clay. While wet, the clay has arcane symbols and wards carved into it, as well as features such as stylized nails, hair and clothing. This bundle is then placed on a plateau, to cure and harden, and afford the honored dead protection from defilement. Finally, the body is placed within a cairn and covered with stones and soil. In time, the alpine grasses grow over the hummock, leaving only a small rise as evidence of what lies beneath.

When they are disturbed, the walking dead of the mountains prowl the misty highlands, their withered bodies creaking like an old tree with each step. Strips of cloth

dangle from their bodies, and shards still cling to their corpses, remnants from the shell created for them. Chunks of shattered ceramic marking their path, they pursue any who steal from them, though they will not cross moving water, for rivers are sacred to their people, and even undeath cannot break that tradition.

Disturbances are very rare, but records do make note of instances where a group of stone crofts has been visited by a former resident. The villagers see this as a good omen, a reminder that the deceased ancestors will always look after them, protecting them from harm. There is a local legend in the Kharolis Mountains that speaks of a monster wandering into a town occupied by the Dragonarmies during the War of the Lance. The creature used magic and sheer physical might to slay numerous Draconians, goblins and human officers before collecting a sword, laying it at the door of the headsman's home, and disappearing into the night. The headsman took it as a sign, and the next day, the villagers began to build a resistance movement to drive the Dragonarmies out. They gathered recruits from other highland villages, forming guerilla groups that harassed caravans, burned encampments and freed captives. Though they could not engage in open warfare with the armies, they caused great damage to the forces in their region.

The dead of the mountains have faces covered in ceramic masks, masks that are at times gruesome parodies of living faces. Stylized mouths full of ivory teeth, eyes set with stones and shells, they present a terrifying aspect to those who have wronged them.

## **Shadows and Secrets: Practices of the Forest Folk**

The people of Ansalon's forests on the Goodlund Peninsula make use of the ancient hardwoods found there, along with the various herbs and plants to preserve their dead before burial in the trees themselves. Upon dying, individuals are shorn of all hair, and placed on stone platforms amidst a slow-burning fire. The smoke dries the bodies for several days, scenting them and preventing decay once interred. The body is wrapped in bark and leaves, before being placed inside a hollow standing tree trunk. The hair of the deceased is then mixed with clay and the opening is sealed shut. There is a graveyard of this type near most major villages, though some groups will share a burial ground.

The walking dead that arise are only slightly desiccated—the drying process seems to toughen the skin without drying the flesh underneath. As a result, these walking dead can sometimes pass for the living, at least from a distance. Their appearance and the smell of smoke and death clings to them though, betraying their unnatural life. They are very rare, rising only when their tombs are defiled or when the forests themselves are threatened. Several of them inflicted great wounds upon the red dragon Malystrixx when she first arrived and began forming the desolation of her realm, burning their forests and slaughtering their descendants. In the end though, they could not stand against her might, succumbing to her fiery breath and rending claws.

The western forests of Coastlund and Ergoth are dotted with bogs and fens, places where people gather fuel for fires,



but also where many a highwayman's victim has been disposed of. Mummies of the bogs are very rare, but when they are encountered, they appear typically as black-skinned, withered skeletons, ambling about on limbs that are curled and misshapen. They often have great gashes upon them, or weapons stuck through them—grim testimony of how they died. The preservation of the bogs pulls the skin tight around the body, constricting movement and drawing the face into a terrible mask of pain. Speaking is very difficult for this type of creature, as such they often communicate telepathically. This intrusion into the mind of another is often shocking and violent, a flood of images and a garbled message that must be decoded to send the creature to its rest. These mummies are often unwilling victims of foul play, and of all the types, most likely to be happy that they are free from their tomb—but insistent that they have some form of justice delivered to them. They can be powerful allies or deadly foes.

## **Empire of Decadence: Istaran Funerary Practices**

The Empire of the Kingpriests had the most elaborate burial customs of all the human nations. There was an obsession with death and burial among Istarans—even commoners were embalmed and wrapped in fine cloths, for which they saved most of their lives. Once embalmed, wrapped and sealed in sarcophagi, a celebration was held for the departed, recounting their deeds and giving blessings to speed them on their way. Almost daily, caravans left the cities of the empire travelling to Zephaniah or the lesser necropolises, wagons full of sarcophagi, attended by professional mourners and celebrants.

The Guild of Keepers drove the caravans, seeing to the actual internment of the remains once the tombs were reached. Family members and loved ones did not typically travel with the caravans—their part in the mourning was now over, though the public must have its turn. Over several days, the caravan slowly made its way along the road, while censers of incense left fragrant smoke in their wake. Few people did not stop to mark the passage of the wagons, laying aside tools and work to stand solemnly while the caravan passed.

The caravans took the dead to Zephaniah, a great necropolis in the mountains of central Istar. There were other cities of the dead throughout the empire, but only Zephaniah contained the remains of the citizens, merchants, Kingpriests and tribal warlords that formed the nation. Zephaniah began as a circle of thirteen tombs on a windswept valley, one for each of the patriarchs.

Over time, the complex grew, as nobles and other personages sought to enhance their reputation with the proximity of their tombs to those of the patriarchs. In time, the valley was filled, and burial sites began to be dug into the walls, until great catacombs extended throughout the mountain region. The site was of great importance to Istar, so much so that no expense was spared to protect it. An order of warrior monks dedicated to Kiri-Jolith made their home in the valley, living in a monastery that overlooked the sprawling site. Guardians both magical and mundane

patrolled the necropolis, seeking out those who would defile it, all the while guiding and guarding pilgrims seeking to honor the Empire's dead.

Zephaniah was destroyed in the Cataclysm, the contents of its tombs spilled into the sea, and cast out by the maelstrom. Many walking dead awoke that day, traveling to the heart of the maelstrom, where they lurk amid the sunken ruins seeking their treasures. Those that find them all then begin the long trek back to Zephaniah across the sea floor. Some travel outwards from the maelstrom, to the coasts of the blood sea, where beachcombers gathered anything of value they could find to survive the dark days after the Cataclysm.

Many towns and villages speak of vengeful creatures from the sea, rising from the depths to enter their towns. They stalked the towns as though searching, and any that opposed them were slaughtered mercilessly. Then, as suddenly as they had come, they were gone, disappearing back into the sea. Folklore tells of creatures wandering across Ansalon in search of their possessions, even hiring adventurers to reclaim their property.

The dead of Istar vary greatly in their appearance. Generally they are well preserved, and have a slightly blue tone to their papery skin. It flakes off continually as they walk, billowing out from their fine burial robes when they move. They are almost never alone in their waking—if a tomb is violated, they will wake their retainers to aid them in dealing with the interlopers.

In the days after the Cataclysm, the dead retain their blue colouration, but leak the waters of the blood sea from their eyes and mouth. The image is terrible to behold, for the mummies appear to leave footprints of blood in their wake while tears of blood pour from their sightless eyes. More than one warrior has broken in fear and run from battle with them.

## **Hoof, Crown and Sail: Burial in the Ergothian Empire**

The first great human empire, Ergoth has a wide range of mortuary rituals. They are typically linked to the ethnic or social group the individual came from in life. Riders of the horde are buried in long deep pits, their horses and retainers buried with them. They are bedecked in their finest armor and weapons, surrounded by grave goods for use in the next life. Each tomb has a single object, a bronze tray, onto which the names and deeds of the dead are inscribed. Held firmly in the hands of the dead when buried, it is only when the platter is stolen that the dead horseman will rise with their retainers, and seek it out.

When the empire rose to its greatest heights, before the war that would give birth to Solamnia, the city of Daltigoth was the center for Imperial burials. Beneath the entire city lie extensive catacombs, forbidden to the masses, except for areas designated for public burials. The tunnels were built in ages past when the high ogres ruled, and as with all things the ogres built, they dwarf all with their scale. The arched ceilings and recessed shrines were initially simple, but over the centuries, the Ergothians embellished the decorations greatly, even adding chambers and crypt complexes for



noble families. Those entombed within are bedecked in their finery, and sealed in stone sarcophagi. Treasures surround them, both magical and mundane, as well as great artworks depicting their lives. The cold of the catacombs has preserved them, preventing much of the rot that would destroy a body in another place.

When they do awaken, they seek out the warmth of the surface, and in particular, the warmth of living flesh. Second only to their goal of hunting down those who disturbed them is the task of finding living bodies to steal the warmth from, before returning to their slumber far below the city. They were very rare before the Cataclysm, for Daltigoth had not faced an invasion or calamity that had desecrated their tombs.

After the fiery mountain ravaged the continent, Daltigoth became a coastal city, and ogres descended from the mountains to drive the survivors out. Their ancient home reclaimed, ogres set about exploring what the humans had built. The catacombs of old, they discovered, had half-filled with seawater, filling some chambers, but generally leaving them traversable by skiffs and other craft. They also discovered small pockets of humans living in the tunnels, emerging to the ruined city at night to gather supplies and food.

A war has existed between the two forces for centuries, the Ergothmen supplied by countrymen outside the city and wishing for its reclamation, and by the ogres lacking the organization and drive to root out the resistance. The humans can do little more than harass the ogres, but in doing so they also explore the tombs, recovering artifacts, and guiding adventurers seeking to make their fortunes. The survivors have found unexpected allies in the ancient dead, several of whom have emerged from the shadows to rescue them when ambushed or chased by ogres. Though the walking dead hate that their tombs are being raided, they hate the occupation of the ogres even more.

The dark-skinned seafarers have different traditions, practices that some say came with them from their ancient homeland across the sea. The scale of the burial ceremony will vary with the status of the individual, but they all follow the same general pattern. Upon dying, an individual is wrapped in sailcloth and sealed with pitch, the body is then placed in a boat, its size according to their rank. The boat is towed behind a great oar-driven barge filled with mourners.

The boat is towed out to sea, ceremonial plugs in the hull are removed and it is cast adrift, where the sea slowly reclaims it. In the case of Imperial nobles, the boat is instead towed to an island and left in a lagoon. The sheltered lagoon is filled with other boats, each containing the remains of dead nobles and their bodyguards. The mourners upon the barge then make sacrifices and throw gifts into the waters, where they sink to the sandy floor below. The lagoon is filled with valuables, but the funerary guards of the island are tasked with protecting them and the sacred site.

With steel and sorcery, they have ensured the safety of the burial site, driving off those who would rob their heroes. They survived the Cataclysm largely intact, but have become a paranoid group since then, fearing any who approach as potential plunderers. This has led them to attack Imperial parties and ships on more than one occasion, and it is only a

matter of time before the Ergothians of the mainland lose their patience and come to the islands in force.

Ergothian mummies reek of salt and tar, their bodies unmarred by time, except where tarred sailcloth sticks to their forms. If their burial craft has sunk into the sea, their body is likely partly eaten by sea life, even to the point of sea creatures taking up residence in it. Such a sight can unhinge even the stoutest cleric. At night they take on an eerie glow, as algae from the sea lights up their features.

## Honor in Life, Honor in Death: Practices of the Solamnics

Most burials in Solamnia are simple graves, but the Knights have a great veneration for their dead. In full armor they are placed unembalmed in stone sarcophagi, and buried in vast crypts. Some are buried in family tombs, while others, especially knights of renown or high station, are buried in great public tombs so that people may mourn them. In tombs where many knights are buried they will each have their own alcove, populated with their weapons and carved tablets recounting their deeds. They rarely rise, except to reclaim property or dispatch desecraters, but legends say that in Solamnia's darkest hour, the dead knights will hear the horn of Solamnus call them, and ride forth to defend their realm.

## MIGHT AND MAJESTY: OGRE BURIALS THROUGH HISTORY

Ogre rituals have a great variety, mainly due to the varying degrees of civilization they have enjoyed throughout their history. Among the ancient high ogres, the dead were commonly cut open to extract the heart, which was burned in a pool of holy oil as an offering to Sargonnas. Following the offering, the corpse was laid bare on mountaintop platforms, covered in salts, and doused in scented oils. After a period of time, the body was uncovered and wrapped into a bundle, and placed within a great stone sarcophagus. This box was then carried, with great ceremony, to great stone tombs carved into the mountain peaks, even higher than the ogre cities themselves. Entry to the tombs was forbidden to all but the priestly caste—visitors could come only as far as the sacrificial altar at the entry gates.

When the ogre-mage Dauroth created the first titans, he sought out some of the most ancient revered dead of the ogres, kings and sorcerers that had not walked the face of Krynn for millennia. Using powerful magics, he summoned them from beyond, and bound them to serve him. Though angered at the disturbance of their rest, they were shocked at the state of ogres of the present, and pleased with Dauroth's goals. They shared their wisdom with him, their skills in planning and plotting, warfare and magic, to allow the ogres to rise again to their former greatness.

The fallen ogres only rarely preserve their dead. Instead, they are buried in massive stone cairns and barrows on mountain plateaus. They are buried with weapons and treasures gathered throughout their lives if they died in battle or of age, but cowards and the conquered are beheaded and covered where they fall, or dumped outside of the city



walls. Heads are never kept, but separated from the body and buried with it. Mummies of fallen ogres are usually rotting, and reek of decay. They are clad in rusted armor and what little finery they possessed, looking like giant zombies. This misidentification has cost more than one adventurer their life, when an ogre mummy has descended upon them with skill of blade and command of foul magics, summoning insects and winds to destroy their foe.

Ogre mages that die have often prepared long in advance for their afterlife, creating artifacts for themselves, building tombs and in some cases even beginning the process of mummification while still alive. They are keenly aware of the price of mortality—that power is fleeting—and so they work to make it less so. Many actively set out to become walking dead, to retain their powers and in some cases, enhance them.

Those that choose to follow this path will seclude themselves in small chambers on a daily basis, surrounded by scented oils and candles, burning them to drive the moisture from their bodies through sweating. They also undergo a fast, eating only dried grains, to prevent the body from thriving, but still keeping it alive. Finally, they imbibe a potion each day to preserve them, an elixir which keeps them alive while it slowly builds in their bodies. One day, it reaches a level where the ogre mage can no longer survive, and the being dies, trapped in the small chamber. Wards and spells are then activated which will in time wake the mage from their slumber, to a new and darkly powerful existence. Those unlucky enough to encounter an ogre mage that has been through this process will find themselves facing an opponent that is full of deadly surprises.†



### About the Author

John Grubber is a teacher, writer and illustrator who lives in Ontario, Canada, and is a regular contributor to The Tobril. He has been previously published in the *Dragonlance Rebels and Tyrants Short Story Anthology*, *More Leaves from the Inn of the Last Home* and *Bertrem's Guide to the War of Souls, Volume 1*. He is currently working on his first fantasy novel.